Dare Boys

AND THE "SWAMP FOX"

Stephen Angus Co.

Claude Franklyn Arnold

Norwich

N. Y.

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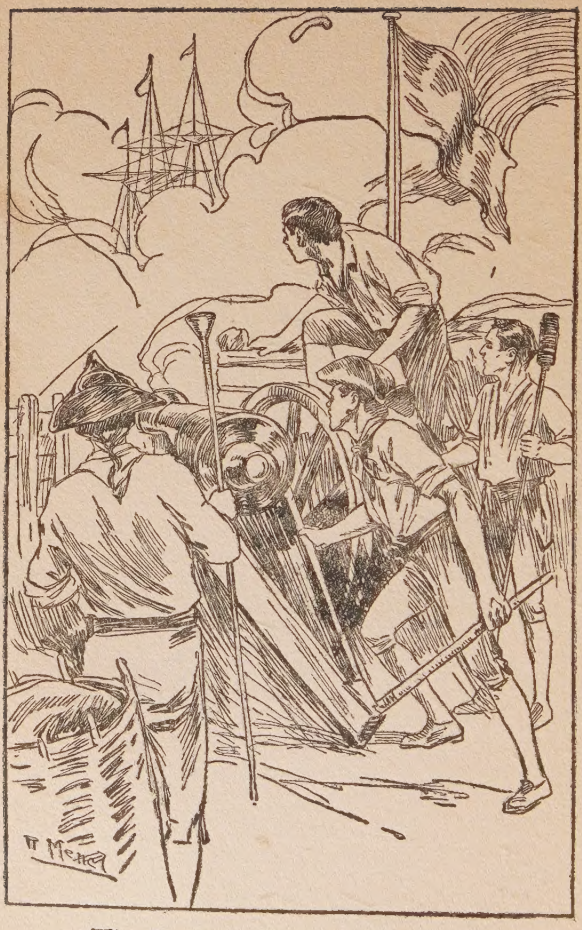

The boys at siege of Charleston

The Dare Boys and the "Swamp Fox"

BY

STEPHEN ANGUS COX

Illustrations by RUDOLF MENCL

NEW YORK
A. L. CHATTERTON CO.
PUBLISHERS

THE DARE BOYS

Stephen Angus Cox, the author of the Dare Boys Series is specially equipped through long study and research to write upon the life and adventures of these two daring sons of the revolutionary period. Every item of historical reference is absolutely correct. The trials and inherent bravery of the sturdy warriors of this epoch are always subjects worth while, but here the dash and bravery of the two Dare boys adds immeasurably to the interest.

THE DARE BOYS OF 1776
THE DARE BOYS ON THE HUDSON
THE DARE BOYS IN TRENTON
THE DARE BOYS ON THE BRANDYWINE
THE DARE BOYS IN THE RED CITY
THE DARE BOYS AFTER BENEDICT ARNOLD
THE DARE BOYS IN VIRGINIA
THE DARE BOYS WITH GENERAL GREENE
THE DARE BOYS WITH LAFAYETTE
THE DARE BOYS AND THE "SWAMP FOX"

Illustrated, Cloth 12mo. Price per volume 50 cents.

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THE DARE BOYS AND THE "SWAMP FOX"

CHAPTER I

The Siege of Charleston

BOOM, boom, boom!

Loudly the cannon roared. Into the city of Charleston, South Carolina, cannon-shot were being poured from the batteries of the British army under General Clinton, on shore, and from cannon on the ships of Admiral Arbuthnot, in the harbor.

It was the 6th of May, of the year 1780, and the British army and fleet had been engaged in the siege of Charleston nearly six weeks. While the ships kept up a cannonading from the harbor, the soldiers on shore were gradually encompassing the city, throwing up earthworks as they advanced, and now they were within effective striking distance. After a council between the two British commanders, it had been decided to begin the attack for which they had been preparing.

So the cannon were booming, the cannon-balls and the shells were falling in the streets of Charleston, and striking houses and business buildings. A reign of terror was being inaugurated.

Governor Rutledge had left Charleston before it was hemmed in, and had taken refuge up the Santee River, while General Lincoln was now wishing that he had fought his way out of the city with his little army of three thousand soldiers, before the British had finished their work of encompassing the city. He had remained, however, at the request of the patriot citizens, who feared rapine and pillage on the part of the British soldiers, who were exasperated because of the resistance that had been made during the past few weeks.

The patriots had cannon, and were returning the fire of the enemy as best they could. In one of the batteries — one that was farthest advanced toward the enemy, were three young patriot soldiers that had taken a leading part in the defense of the city, and who, during four years that they had been members of the patriot army, had done splendid work in the North and in the South, against the British. These three youths

who were veterans in experience if not in years were Dick and Tom Dare, known throughout the country as The Dare Boys, and Ben Foster, their comrade, the latter a youth who had been a neighbor, where they lived, up in New Jersey, about three miles east of Philadelphia.

Dick and Tom Dare and Ben Foster were helping fire the cannon in this battery, and were efficient hands, for they were strong and willing, and were quick and active. The shots from their battery were giving the British more trouble than from any other two or three.

When evening came, Dick, Tom and Ben were relieved, another shift of soldiers taking their places in the battery, the three went to the building where they had their quarters, they being members of Captain Morgan's company, which had been sent to Charleston to aid Lincoln in defending the city. After they had washed the powder grime from their hands and faces, they went to the mess-room and sat down to eat their supper.

"What do you think of our prospects for holding the British off, Dick?" asked Ben, as they were eating with relish born of hunger the food that had been placed before them.

Dick Dare, a handsome, manly-looking youth, shook his head, a sober look on his face.

"I don't think we can hold the British off, Ben," he replied. "Why, they have three or four times as many men as we have, and they are attacking from both the shore and the water. It would seem that they must soon capture the city."

"Well, General Lincoln will make a good fight, anyhow," said Tom.

"Oh, yes, he'll do that," admitted Dick. "But we have less than three thousand men, and that is not nearly strong enough a force to stand the British off with."

They continued to talk of the situation till they had finished eating, and then they went out upon the street and walked about the city an hour or so, observing the damage that was being wrought by the shots and shells from the British cannon on shore and on shipboard.

The streets were thronged with men, and even women and children, for the people seemed to feel that they were safer in the streets than in the houses. There were houses burning in various parts of the city, making it fairly light. It was possible generally to see the shots and shells flying through the air, and the people could

get out of the way of the falling missiles, whereas, in the buildings, they could not see the missiles coming, and felt fearful that they might at any moment be hit by shot or shell crashing through the roof or side walls.

But they could not stay up always, and by midnight the majority of the non-combatants had entered the houses and laid down, tired out.

Our three heroes whom this story most concerns were in their quarters by nine o'clock, and were soon sleeping soundly. Fears of cannon balls and shells did not keep them awake. They were not unused to sleeping in the midst of danger.

They were up bright and early, next morning, and returned to their places in the battery, working steadily and continuously throughout the day. This was kept up till the 8th, at which time the situation of the patriots was deplorable.

The patriot force was largely made up of militia, without prior experience in warfare, provisions were getting low, and the Tories of the city were beginning to cause disaffection among the citizens. The officers in charge of the batteries and defenses told General Lincoln that the lines could not be held more than a few days longer, and that a strong and determined assault

might carry them in a very short time. Shells and solid shot were fairly raining down in the city, striking houses, setting them on fire, and killing inoffensive and non-combative citizens. Further resistance seemed useless, even foolish, as success could not be hoped for and lives and property were being hourly sacrificed, so after a council with his officers, General Lincoln sent a flag of truce to the enemy. An officer representing Lincoln had an interview with an officer under General Clinton, with the result that Clinton sent in word that he demanded the surrender of the garrison and patriot citizens as prisoners of war, all the forts and works, together with the shipping that remained in the harbor. He agreed only, that the town property of those within the lines should remain unmolested, and that all prisoners should be paroled.

General Lincoln then asked a truce till the next day, to consider the matter, and this was granted by Clinton. Lincoln and his officers held a council, discussed the matter fully, and then sent word, late in the evening, that the terms could not be accepted.

The result was, that at eight o'clock that evening the firing was resumed from the British on

shore and on the vessels, and again the reign of terror was on.

It was indeed a night of horror to the citizens of Charleston. Two hundred cannon roared constantly, and the very city quaked from the vibrations, while the smoke of the guns blotted out the moon and stars, which were shining brightly, putting a somber pall over the city. Shells were flying through the air in all directions, their courses being marked by a trail of sparks from the sputtering fuses. Some of the shells exploded in midair, while others fell upon houses and in the streets, and in as many as five or six places at the same time burning buildings could be seen.

The firing was incessant during the entire night, cannon-balls and shells whizzing and hissing through the air, striking buildings, and in some instances magazines, which blew up with a terrific concussion. Guns burst from overcharging, killing gunners, and with women and children shrieking in the streets, and wounded men groaning on all sides, it was indeed a terrible night.

Of course, the patriots returned the fire as best they could, and their cannon-balls and shells must

have done considerable execution among the enemy, but nothing to compare with the havoc that was being wrought in Charleston by the shots from the British guns.

Nor was there any cessation next morning. The British kept up the terrible bombardment, and solid shot often penetrated the embrasures of the patriot batteries, killing the gunners. Sandbags were used, as a protection, but the cannon-balls would hurl them aside, and some of the batteries had to be evacuated.

This was kept up till the 11th, when in response to the request of Lieutenant-Governor Gadsden, and a number of the patriot citizens, General Lincoln sent word to General Clinton that his terms would be agreed to, whereupon firing immediately ceased.

Articles of capitulation were drawn up and signed by Clinton and Lincoln, and by Lieutenant-governor Gadsden, and then on the 12th it was agreed that the patriot soldiers should march out and lay down their arms. They had offered a brave and desperate defense that had lasted nearly six weeks.

The British were now to take possession of the city, and the great Siege of Charleston was at an end.

CHAPTER II

Dick's Plan

DURING the forenoon of the 12th, Dick, Tom and Ben were in their quarters, resting up after their arduous duties of the past six weeks. They were thoroughly tired out and disappointed because the city had been captured by the British, but they were not cast down. They talked as if they were merely resting, to begin work again against the British on the morrow. They were concerned by the knowledge of injuries to their comrades. Both Tim the Irish soldier and Fritz their German companion had been wounded, but not seriously. Miller the Virginia schoolmaster had been sent out of the city before the siege, and of his whereabouts they knew nothing.

Finally, after a period of silence, Dick Dare said, slowly: "Boys, I have a scheme."

"What is it?" asked Tom, eagerly, while Ben looked at the speaker inquiringly.

"General Lincoln is going to surrender his men into the hands of the British to-day, I understand."

"Yes," said Ben.

"Well, I have made up my mind that we won't surrender along with the rest of the army."

Tom and Ben whistled inquiringly as they were wont to do on such occasions. "How can we help it, Dick?" Tom asked.

"By not going out with the army."

"You mean that we will remain behind, here in the city?"

"Yes, and here in our quarters."

The boys eyed Dick eagerly. It was evident that the idea appealed to them.

"That would suit me," said Tom.

"And me," said Ben. "But, can we do it?"

"I think we can," said Dick. "There is a closet where furniture is stored. There is a wardrobe there into which we can get. All we will have to do will be to simply stay here in our quarters when the army marches out to lay down its arms, and then, after the British have taken possession of the city, and all is quiet, we will slip out and away."

"We may be able to do that," said Tom.

"But, where will we go, after we leave the city?"

"I have that figured out, too, boys. You have heard of a partisan leader by the name of Francis Marion, in the interior of the State."

"'The Swamp Fox,'" exclaimed Tom.

Dick nodded. "'The Swamp Fox,'" he said. "We will go and join his little army."

"That would suit me," said Ben. "I've heard some wonderful stories about the 'Swamp Fox,' and what good work he has done in striking the Redcoats and Tories."

"Yes," said Dick. "He has made himself a terror to the enemy."

"I would like to be with him a while," said Tom, his eyes shining. "He is said to be here, there and everywhere. He strikes at one point on one day, and somewhere else, perhaps miles distant, the next. I would like that."

"I guess that would give you action enough to satisfy you, Tom," smiled Ben.

"Then you boys are with me in this matter?" said Dick.

"Yes, indeed," said Ben.

"Of course we are," said Tom. "I'm mighty glad you thought of the plan, Dick. It will beat being made prisoners by the Redcoats, and of

course if we surrender and are parolled upon our word of honor we could not fight again."

"You are right," nodded Ben.

"Then it is settled," determined Dick. "When the army marches out, to-day, we won't go with it, but will remain here in our quarters, and this evening we will slip out, make our way out of the city, and join the 'Swamp Fox.'"

They remained in their room, in the building the company of Captain Morgan occupied, till they heard the other soldiers assembling in the street, and then, knowing that an orderly would soon come and order them to march out, they stepped into the large closet at one side of the room and closed the door.

They had been in the room only a few minutes, when they heard footsteps in the hall, and then the door of their room was opened.

They stood perfectly quiet, and waited. "Ha, the Dare boys and Ben Foster have gone out somewhere," they heard the orderly exclaim. "Well, they will fall in line as the company marches along the street, likely."

Then the door closed, and when the sound of the orderly's footsteps had died out, the youths emerged from the closet, drawing long breaths of relief.

"We'll stay right here in the room till evening," said Dick. "And as soon as it is dark, we will slip out and escape from the city."

They put this plan into effect, and all was quiet in the building for several hours. They judged that they were the only persons in the building. They arranged their hiding-place in the closet so as to be able to make immediate use thereof when occasion should require.

Along toward evening they heard footsteps and voices, and Dick, on opening the door slightly and looking out, discovered that some British soldiers were in the hall. They were evidently taking possession of the rooms and apparently a company of British were going to use the building as quarters.

Dick closed the door and quickly apprised his companions of the situation.

"What shall we do?" Tom asked, in a low voice. "They will undoubtedly use this room, along with the rest."

"We can't escape by way of the window," said Ben. "We are in the third story, and it is a sheer drop of forty or fifty feet to the ground."

"Surely not," said Dick. "We'll take refuge in the closet again, that's a part of my scheme."

"That will not be very pleasant," grumbled

Ben. "But it seems to be the only thing to do." He was wondering however, and so was Tom as to what further plan Dick had devised.

So they entered the closet, closed the door, and secreted themselves in the wardrobe. A few minutes later sure enough several British soldiers entered the room and took possession of it. They laughed and talked, and set about making themselves comfortable. The three youths in the closet, huddled there, almost smothered, waited as patiently as they could, hoping the Redcoats would later leave the room and afford the three an opportunity to slip out and away. One soldier opened the closet door but saw nothing to attract his attention.

The time passed very slowly, and the patriot youths thought the Redcoats never would leave the room. When evening drew near, however, there was a bugle call and the soldiers finally made their way out of the room, and immediately the youths got out of their hiding-place.

"Phew," whistled Tom. "That was hotter in there than when the British were bombarding us with shots and shells at the rate of one every ten seconds."

"Well, what next?" asked Ben.

Dick did not answer but he was busily engaged

sorting over the extra equipment of the British. This was strewn about the room.

"I see now," cried Tom with a laugh as Dick encompassed himself in a British uniform. The other youths quickly did likewise.

"And now we must slip downstairs and out of the building," said Dick. "Come along."

He opened the door cautiously and looked out in the hall, and seeing that it was clear, he stepped out, Tom and Ben following. They made their way along the hall and down the stairs, and then on down to the first floor, but just as they reached the lower hall, the front door opened and a British officer and several soldiers entered.

On catching sight of the three, the British officer exclaimed. "Ah, whom have we here?"

Dick had hoped that they would be able to get outside of the building before attracting anyone's attention, but some excuse was necessary so he said, "we are strangers here like yourself and have strayed into the wrong building." At this the three saluted and passed out.

"We must make quick time now," exclaimed Tom, "they will soon discover the loss of the uniforms we have on." As it turned out this was the very thing that occurred.

CHAPTER III

The Deserted Mansion

THE three patriot youths walked rapidly and at the first cross street, they turned to the right, and headed toward the outskirts of the city, but they had not proceeded far when they became aware that they were being pursued by a crowd of soldiers and citizens. The dusk of evening favored them, but escape could only be accomplished by taking to their heels.

The youths were fast runners and doing their very best they gradually increased the distance between themselves and their pursuers. They discarded as they ran the garments they had borrowed from the Redcoats with which they were encumbered and which to some degree impeded their progress.

"I guess we're going to make our escape," said Tom, after a glance back over his shoulder.

"Yes, if we don't meet a party of Redcoats," said Dick.

As they drew near the edge of the city, still running at top speed, they kept a sharp lookout ahead, for they knew that there would be sentinels, and perhaps a picket line to get through.

The yells of the pursuers came to their hearing only faintly, now, and the three were not much afraid of capture, so far as the pursuers were concerned. The danger lay in front.

Presently they saw a sentinel, and he was standing with his back toward them, looking in the other direction. Evidently he had not yet heard the sounds of the commotion made by the party chasing the fugitives.

The three youths were almost upon the soldier before he heard them, and then he whirled about. At sight of the runaways he started to level his musket, but they were upon him, and he was knocked down, his musket flying out of his hands, while the youths kept right onward at the top of their speed.

"Hi, there, stop, I say!" yelled the sentinel. Then he scrambled, spluttering, to his feet, hastened to where his musket lay, picked it up, leveled it and fired.

Crack, the weapon rang out, and Tom gave a cry of pain.

"Hit, Tom?" asked Ben, solicitously.

"Yes — a little scratch, I guess, in the right arm."

"Does it hurt much?" asked Dick.

"No, just stings a little."

"I guess the wound isn't serious then," said Dick, but he kept an anxious eye on his brother, fearing that he might be hurt worse than he thought.

Tom continued to run as fast as ever, however, and his face did not get pale, so his companions judged that he was not seriously injured.

Just then another shot was heard. Another sentinel had caught sight of them and fired upon them, but his bullet went wide.

"Missed," said Ben.

"Yes, and he's likely the last sentinel that we will have to pass," said Dick.

They did not slacken their speed and presently they were within the shelter of a thick growth of woods, which at that time approached close to the edge of the city.

Here they slackened speed, and after they had gone half a mile or so, they came to a stop, and

stood still, listening. They heard no sounds of pursuit.

"Does your wound pain you much, Tom?" asked Dick.

"No, it just smarts a little, Dick. It isn't much of a hurt."

"All right. Well, let's go on, then."

They continued onward at a moderate pace, picking their way through the forest. Presently they came to a cross road, and decided to follow it.

They kept onward till they had gone perhaps two or three miles, and then they caught sight of a large colonial mansion standing back from the road two or three hundred yards.

"It's an old country mansion," said Dick. "Shall we go and ask to be permitted to stay all night?"

"Yes, let's do," said Tom. "I'm beginning to feel a bit weak. I guess my wound has bled considerably, after all."

This decided Dick, and he at once led the way toward the building. Reaching it, they stepped up onto the piazza, and advancing to the door, Dick knocked.

They waited several minutes, and there came

no sound from within. "Seems as if they have all gone to bed," said Ben.

"I'll try again," said Dick, and he did, this time knocking loudly.

Again they waited, with the same result, and Tom suggested that perhaps the house was vacant.

"I wouldn't think so, a fine residence like this," said Dick. Then he knocked a third time. And when still there was no response from within, he came to the conclusion that the house was temporarily at least without tenants.

Then he tried the door, and to his surprise found that it was not fastened. It opened, and the three entered. They felt their way into a room, and Dick chanced upon a candle. He soon had a light burning, and they took a look about them.

They were in a very large room, wide, long and high ceiling, with a gallery across the farther end. It was fairly well furnished, and Dick told Tom to sit down on a sofa at one side, which the youth did.

Then Dick helped him to remove his coat and vest, and made an examination of the wound. It was not serious, but had bled considerably,

and Dick dressed the wound skillfully, using salve from a box that he carried in his pocket, after which Tom again donned his coat and vest.

"That's better," he said. "The wound doesn't burn and smart like it did."

"It'll be well in a few days," said Dick. "Now, let's have a look around this place. Seems as if the people had gone away and left it."

They found more candles, and lighting one for each, they made their way through the rooms on the lower floor, and found that there was no one in the place. They then went upstairs, with the same result. The house was vacant.

"The owners probably got scared away during the siege," said Dick. "Which would indicate that they were patriots."

"Yes," said Ben, "or they wouldn't have been frightened by the proximity of the Redcoats."

"I wonder if there's anything to eat in the house," said Tom. "I believe some food would strengthen me."

"Come down into the kitchen," proposed Dick. "Likely we will find something there."

They made their way back down into the kitchen, and fortunately found plenty of pro-

visions. They proceeded to start a fire, and then Dick cooked some bacon and hoecakes. A feast for the hungry trio was soon prepared, which they ate heartily. Tom, when they had finished, said that he felt as strong as ever.

"Good," said Dick. "Now, what shall we do, boys — stay here all night, or go on?"

"I think we had better stay here," said Tom.

"I think it best to stay here till morning," said Ben. "We don't know where to go to look for the 'Swamp Fox.' It will be hard enough to locate him in the daytime, without trying it at night."

"I guess you are right," agreed Dick. "Well, we'll stay here till morning, then. There are beds upstairs, and here is grub plenty down here, so we can get a good night's sleep, a good breakfast in the morning, and will be in fine shape to continue our journey."

"Right," said Tom. "And I say let's get to bed."

"I say the same," said Ben.

"Come on upstairs, then," said Dick.

They went upstairs to a large bedroom, and entered and threw themselves down on the beds that were there, and were quickly asleep.

They slept several hours, but it seemed to Dick that he had only been asleep a few minutes, when he was awakened by something, he knew not what. He rose up in bed, and listened intently. At first he heard nothing, and was about to lie down. Then suddenly he gave a start, and a cold chill went over him, for he heard the sound of voices.

Somebody was downstairs, undoubtedly, and more than one person, at that, and Dick at once leaped to the conclusion that a party of Redcoats had followed them from Charleston, and had entered the building and were about to search it, looking for the fugitives.

"And they'll be upstairs in a few minutes, likely!" he thought. "We must find a hiding-place, and quickly."

Then he heard the voices, more loudly, and realized that the intruders were coming upstairs!

CHAPTER IV

The Ghost

"WE'LL take as much stuff away from here to-night as possible," Dick heard one man say, "for I think the Howards'll be back to-morrow."

"Do you think so?" asked another.

"Yes, now that the British soldiers are in Charleston, and are not camped all around here, likely the Howards'll come back. That was the reason they went, you know."

"Yes. It's a wonder the soldiers didn't take everything of value out of the house."

"They were too busy trying to capture Charleston, I guess."

"I reckon that's so. Do you suppose they'll come out here, now, and plunder the place?"

"They may think of doing it, and that's another reason why we must get as much of the plunder away to-night, as possible."

"Well, we can move a lot of stuff before morning."

"Of course we can. Ha! What was that?"

Dick Dare, listening, had become informed regarding the mission of the intruders, and judging them to be Tories and guerrillas, and figuring that such fellows would likely be superstitious and cowardly, had quickly evolved the idea of trying to frighten them away by playing ghost. The Howards, the owners of the place, were undoubtedly patriots, or they would not have left on account of the presence of Redcoats, and this made Dick more desirous of saving their property, which these scoundrels were figuring on carrying away. So he got up quickly, wrapped a sheet around him, and stole to the door of the bedroom, which he opened softly, and then he gave utterance to a low, hollow groan.

It was this groan that had come to the hearing of the leader of the Tories, and that had caused him to utter the exclamation, "Ha! What was that?"

"What was what, Hank?" another asked.

They had evidently paused, and were standing still, listening, for Dick could not hear the sound of their footsteps.

"I didn't hear anything," said another, in a low voice that just reached Dick's ears.

"I did," said the first speaker. "I heard something that sounded like a groan."

"Sho, you don't say!" exclaimed another, in a low, somewhat excited voice.

"Yes, I — there! There it is again!"

Dick had uttered another groan, this time louder than before, and all the Tories had evidently heard it this time, for Dick could hear their chorused exclamations of surprise. Then they conversed together in excited whispers, the sound of which barely reached Dick's hearing, he being unable, of course, to distinguish any words.

Again he groaned, louder than before, and with a rising and falling inflection that must have been somewhat thrilling to the hearers. They were silent a few moments, and then fell to whispering again at a great rate. They did not retreat, however, and so Dick decided that something other than groans would be needed, and making his voice as hollow and sepulchral sounding as possible, he said:

"Base mortals, what would ye here?"

"A ghost!" cried one of the intruders, his

voice quivering woefully with fright and terror.

"Oh-h-h-h!" came from another, in what was very nearly a groan of horror.

Feeling that he was giving them a pretty thorough fright, Dick again spoke: "Beware!" he said, in the hollow, sepulchral voice. "To remain in this house means death! Begone! Go at once."

There was a brief silence, and then suddenly there was a clattering, as one of the intruders went hastily down the stairs, and while yet up several steps, he must have tripped, for he fell and went clattering to the bottom, giving vent as he did so to a howl of terror. Doubtless he thought the ghost would get him before he could get to his feet.

Then Dick thumped against the door with his fist, making considerable noise, and stamped on the floor, and at the same time uttered a series of blood-curdling groans. There was a great clattering, as the other intruders followed the example set them by their companion, another even tripping and falling, and from the sounds that came up to Dick's hearing, they must have landed in a bunch at the bottom, where they evidently became entangled, for there was the sound

of struggling, and then angry exclamations, such as:

"Let go of me!"

"Quit kicking me!"

"Oh-h-h! Ouch!"

"You gouged me in the eye, blame ye!"

Dick feeling confident, now, that he could frighten them out of the house, followed with another series of blood-curdling groans, thumped the door and stamped on the floor, and then called down, in the same hollow, sepulchral voice he had before used:

"Go at once! Hasten! To remain means death!"

And evidently the Tories and would-be plunderers did hurry. There was the sound of great scrambling, and then the patter-patter of feet on the floor of the hall, as one ran out of the house as swiftly as possible. And then the others followed, till Dick had counted six. And just then he heard the voices of Tom and Ben, asking in wonder and excitement:

"What's the matter, Dick?"

"What's all this noise about? Who is downstairs?"

Dick's voice and the noise he had made pound-

ing on the door and stamping on the floor, as well as the noise made by the intruders, had awakened Tom and Ben, who were pretty sound sleepers as a rule.

"Some scoundrels were going to plunder the house," explained Dick. "I have just frightened them away."

"You don't say, Dick!" exclaimed Tom. "Why didn't you wake Ben and me up? We would have liked to have had a hand in that."

"I didn't think about it, besides I did very well alone," was the reply.

"I wonder if they have all gone?" said Ben.

"I think it likely."

"Let's go down and see," said Tom, eagerly. He was a great youth for adventure, and was always eager to take part in anything affording excitement.

"Come along," said Dick. "We'll go down and see if they have all gone."

"Shall we light a candle?" asked Ben.

"No," said Dick. "We don't want the rascals to see us."

"That's so."

They made their way downstairs, slowly and cautiously, and when they were at the foot of

the stairs, they stopped and felt around, but did not find anybody there. Dick had thought that possibly one or two of the intruders might have fallen hard enough to knock them senseless.

Tom hastened along the hall, to the front door, and out upon the piazza, Ben and Dick following, but they did not see any signs of the enemy, or hear any sounds to indicate the presence of the Tories.

"I guess they're still running," chuckled Tom.

"Likely you are right," agreed Dick.

"They were undoubtedly greatly frightened," said Ben. "At any rate, so I should judge, from the noise they made."

"Yes, they were pretty badly frightened," said Dick. "Well, let's go back to bed. Likely they will not return."

"You may be sure they won't return," said Tom.

"No, they have had all they want of the 'ghost' for one night," said Ben.

Dick laughed, as he remembered the terror he had undoubtedly occasioned in the hearts of the intruders, and agreed with Ben that doubtless the Tories had enough of the ghost.

They entered the house and closed the door,

and then made their way back up to the bedroom, where they sat down and talked a while, Dick explaining the affair to his comrades, who listened with interest.

"Well, they won't carry away the furnishings of this house to-night, anyway," said Tom, after Dick had finished his story.

"No," agreed Dick. "They are not likely to return. Well, let's get to sleep again."

They lay down, and in a very few minutes were sound asleep, which evidenced the fact of their perfect health and good nerves. The thought that there was a possibility of the return of the Tories did not keep them awake at all.

Nor did the Tories return. All was quiet during the rest of the night, and the youths awoke much refreshed early next morning. Again they made their way to the kitchen, where they built a fire, and Ben taking his turn proceeded to cook their breakfast, which consisted of bacon and hoecakes. When the meal was ready, they sat up to the table and ate as only healthy young soldiers could eat.

When they had finished, Tom turned to Dick and said: "Well, what is next on the programme, Dick?"

"We are going to try to find the 'Swamp Fox,' Tom, as we started out to do," was the reply.

"Well, I hope that we may find him soon, for I want to get to work again as quickly as possible, fighting the Redcoats."

"Yes, that is what I wish also, Tom," said Dick. "And now, we will fix up a package of provisions for each of us to carry and will be going."

They made up the packages, taking a liberal amount of provisions, and then they left the house and set out in a southerly direction. They did not know where they would find Francis Marion, but had heard that he was among the swamps about thirty or forty miles from Charleston, and made their way in that direction.

At noon they stopped beside a little stream and cooked their dinner. Ben was the first to finish his meal and walked away down the creek a ways looking for a place to bathe. Dick and Tom were still eating, when six rough-looking men suddenly emerged from amid the thick bushes nearby and confronted them. In the men's hands were heavy bludgeons, and they eyed the youths threateningly.

CHAPTER V

The "Swamp Fox"

ON an island deep in a great swamp, seated about a campfire, at which supper was being cooked, were sixty or seventy men. They were a ragged, nondescript looking lot of men, but were fairly well armed, each having a rifle and one or two pistols. A little to one side, seated on a log, was a small, dark-complexioned man, who at first glance did not impress one as being out of the ordinary, yet this man was at the time of which we write, one of the most famous personages in the South, for he was the celebrated General Francis Marion, better known as "The Swamp Fox."

And this little force, consisting of sixty or seventy ragged, ill-clad patriots, was the "army" with which he had done such great work in that

region, swooping down upon Redcoats and Tories unexpectedly, killing and wounding many, and then disappearing quickly, to as quickly reappear at some other point and repeat the operation.

And this was the man that Dick and Tom Dare and Ben Foster were trying to find. That he and his force were somewhere within a radius of thirty or forty miles of Charleston the patriot youths were certain, but they did not know where his rendezvous was, and judging by the looks of the surroundings of this camp in the swamp, they would have hard work finding him.

Marion's troup had just finished their supper, when a man entered the camp in considerable haste and made his way to where Marion sat, and saluted.

"Ah, Miller," said the "Swamp Fox," "what is the news?"

"There is a large band of Indians just at the edge of the swamp, sir," the man called Miller replied. It was indeed the Virginia schoolmaster, a member of the Dare boys company, but now with "Swamp Fox's" band.

General Marion looked interested. "A war party?" he asked.

"Yes."

"All painted up, are they, and with their feather headdresses on?"

"Yes, General Marion."

"How large a band is it?"

"There must be at least three hundred warriors, sir."

Marion looked sober. "H'm," he murmured, gazing thoughtfully at the ground, "that is a rather strong force, true."

"Yes, sir. And I believe that they are here especially to try to find our rendezvous and strike us a blow."

"You think they have been sent after us by Cornwallis, the British General?"

"Yes, sir, I do."

"H'm." Marion was silent and thoughtful a few moments, and then asked: "What are the Indians doing? Are they resting quietly in camp, or do they seem as if bent on doing some searching this evening?"

"They seemed quiet, sir. They were cooking their food when I came away."

Marion glanced around him, at his men, and then again looked at the ground in front of him in a thoughtful manner.

"I guess that we had better take the initiative,

Miller," he said, presently. "Instead of waiting and giving them a chance to find our rendezvous, we will, as soon as it is dark, move out and make an attack."

"I think that will be a good idea, sir."

"How far from the point where the path from the swamp connects with the shore are the Indians, Miller?"

"About half a mile."

"Good. That will enable us to make a detour and approach the camp from the opposite direction. And by so doing we will throw them off the track and make them likely to look for us in some other direction than the right one, which would lead them into the swamp."

"That will be a splendid idea, General Marion."

The "Swamp Fox" now addressed his men telling them what Miller had just told him. As soon as it was dark, his orders were, they would go and make an attack on the redskins. The men were pleased.

"The Indians are hunting for our rendezvous," said the "Swamp Fox," "with the intention, undoubtedly, of putting us to death, and we will strike first and turn the tables on them."

"We sure will," said one of the men. "When you are ready, just say the word, General Marion, and we'll get after the redskins."

"Just as soon as it is dark, we will start," said the "Swamp Fox."

The men at once began looking to their weapons, to see that they were in good shape, and when the time came for them to make the start, they were ready.

They set out through the swamp, following a narrow, crooked and winding path that led through an oozy bog that was seemingly bottomless, for anything that once got sucked down into the bog, disappeared and was never seen again.

But the men constituting Marion's little force were very much at home in the swamp, and they had no difficulty in following the path, even in the darkness, and presently they reached the mainland. Here they paused a few moments, and Marion gave his men instructions, after which they made a detour and then advanced toward the camp of the Indians slowly and with great caution.

Closer and closer to the Indian camp the patriot partisan band drew, and when they were within rifle-shot distance, they paused and took

as careful an observation of the encampment as they could by the light of the several fires brightly burning.

The Indians were seated about, most of them smoking carelessly, and it was evident that they were not suspecting danger. The patriots had made the approach with as much silence and skill as the Indians themselves could have shown.

After taking a survey, the whispered word went around, starting from the "Swamp Fox," and the little band slipped cautiously nearer, and again stopped.

Another whispered command, conveyed from man to man, starting with Marion, and the patriots leveled their rifles and took careful aim. A few moments, and then there sounded a low, quavering whistle. This was the signal to fire, and immediately the patriots pulled trigger. A crashing roar rang out that awoke the night echoes for miles around, as the sixty or more shots were fired.

Although it was dark, which made it difficult to aim very exactly, only the faintest glimmer of light from the campfire resting on the sights, yet the patriot bullets cut down twenty-five or thirty of the redskins, dead and wounded.

And then the scene that followed beggars description. The redskins, taken by surprise, sprang to their feet and rent the air with wild yells and shrieks. They seized their bows and arrows, and fired a flight of arrows in among the trees, while cries of pain went up from the wounded. It was indeed a terrible scene.

"Now with the pistols!" cried Marion, and the men opened fire with their pistols, increasing the confusion in the Indian camp who thought themselves beset by a numerous company. Then the next moment the savages, demoralized by the rain of bullets, suddenly fled from the light of the campfire into the dark depths of the surrounding forest.

The "Swamp Fox" now justified his appellation by giving the command to beat a quick retreat, and the men hastened away in the direction of the point where lay the path leading into the swamp where it touched the mainland.

They reached the point in question in a few minutes, and made their way back to their camp, where those who had received wounds from arrows, were given attention. Six of the men were wounded, but fortunately none of the injuries were at all serious.

"Well, I think we rather spoiled their plans," said Marion, addressing Miller, his only officer. "That blow will make them exceedingly cautious, and they will not be so eager to try to find us as was the case before."

"I judge that you are right, General Marion," said Miller. "We must have killed a number, and wounded a good many."

"Yes, so we did. Well, I think that there is little danger of them finding our rendezvous, to-night at any rate, and we can rest easy."

"Still, it might be a good idea for me to go to the mainland and do a bit of reconnoitering, sir, don't you think?"

"Oh, yes, if you feel like doing so, Miller," was the reply. "Go along; but as I said, I don't think we are in any danger of being found to-night."

"The redskins are pretty shrewd, sir," said Miller. "They may figure that we have a rendezvous near, guess that it is in the swamp, look for and find the path and discover our camp. Though, like you, I don't really think there is much danger that they will find us."

"Go and reconnoiter, as you suggest Miller. The redskins might get onto our trail and find

the path, though I don't really think they will."

"I will go at once, sir," said Miller, and he left the encampment and made his way along the path toward the mainland.

It was dark, and he had to go slowly and feel his way, even though familiar with the path, and when he was about two-thirds of the distance to the mainland, he suddenly, in reaching ahead, to feel for the solid path, touched the unseen groping hand of a human being.

"An Indian!" thought Miller, a thrill going through him.

The next moment he found himself struggling in the grasp of a large and powerful adversary.

CHAPTER VI

An Encounter with Tories

"HOW do you do, sirs?" said Dick, calmly, to the six Tories who confronted him.

"How are ye?" was the reply. "An' who are ye, ef I may ask?"

"We are young men who are on our way over to the west part of the state, sir," was the reply. "And who are you?"

A scowl came over the spokesman's face, and he replied gruffly: "I dunno's thet's any uv your bizness, is et?"

"Just about as much our business as our identity is yours," was the calm reply. "I merely asked a civil question, the same as you did us, and courtesy would dictate that you should give a civil answer."

"Well, et's none uf your bizness who we are," was the surly reply. "An' I'm thinkin' that ye're not tellin' the truth about yourselves."

"What makes you think that?"

"Because, ye look to me like rebels."

"I don't see why we should look like rebels, any more than loyalists, sir," was the quiet reply.

"Wal, ye do. An' I'll bet that ye are rebels, too. Mebby ye hev escaped from the British at Charleston."

"That is merely a foolish guess on your part," said Dick. "You —"

A look of rage leaped to the man's face, and he grasped his club menacingly, his companions following suit. They stood there, threatening the youths with the bludgeons, glaring at them fiercely, and with a look of triumph on their faces. Dick could but recognize the seriousness of the situation. Ben had wandered from sight and Tom with his wounded arm made the imminent contest an unequal one. When preparing the meal Dick had laid aside his pistols and they were out of reach.

"Don't ye dare ter call me uh fool, young feller!" snarled the spokesman. "Ef ye do, I'll blow th' top uv your head off."

A dangerous glint now appeared in the keen gray eyes of Dick Dare. He sounded a whistle which Ben would know as a signal call, but the

import of which the six men would not recognize. Almost immediately from the far side he saw Ben stealthily approaching.

"I didn't call you a fool," said Dick. "But, I am inclined to think that if I were to do so, I would not be far out of the way."

Tom Dare laughed aloud, and Ben in the distance grinned. The youths had had too many dangerous experiences during the years that they had been members of the patriot army to be alarmed by being threatened by half a dozen rough-looking scoundrels, who were evidently not versed in warfare, but who were doubtless reckoning on the fact that they were men, and six, as against as they supposed two youths.

They did not know that they were opposed to three of as dangerous fighters as they could have found in a year's search, but they were likely to discover this fact before they got through with the Dare Boys and Ben Foster.

"What's thet ye say?" yelled the spokesman, in a rage. "Do ye dare to talk to me that away, hey? Why, I've a good mind to knock your head off, ye sassy young rascal, ye!"

The six glared angrily, and it seemed evident that the others would at a word from their leader,

take quick action. They looked as if they would have been glad to annihilate the youths.

But before the leader of the gang could give the order to strike, if he really thought of doing so, Dick gave now a low whistle, which was the signal he used in such circumstances for action, and the two brothers hurled themselves at the nearest of the six men, Ben leaping upon them from behind and all so quickly, that darting in underneath the uplifted clubs the ruffians did not have a chance to take action. In another instant they were piled up in a squirming, struggling conglomerate and lay, where they had been thrown by the youths, who had knocked their legs from under them.

Then the youths secured their pistols and stood with leveled weapons, when the six Tories scrambled to their feet. Although the ruffians looked as if they would have been glad to tear the three, limb from limb, they had to take it out in glaring angrily. They did not dare make an attack. Their clubs lay on the ground, not far away, but the Tories did not dare try to recover them.

"It seems that we have the upper hand, now," said Dick quietly. "Doesn't it seem that way to you?"

Again Tom laughed loudly. He had a lively sense of humor, and the situation was such as to amuse him. The look of anger and disappointment on the faces of the six Tories was indeed comical.

"Ye think ye're mighty smart, don't ye!" hissed the leader of the gang.

"Well, I think we have demonstrated the fact that we were too smart for you," said Dick. "You came here and disturbed us, and talked arbitrarily, and you have only yourselves to blame for the plight you are in now. How do you like your situation?"

"Better than you'll like your'n, ef ever we git another chance at ye!" was the vicious reply.

"No doubt," smiled Dick. "But we do not intend to let you get another chance at us."

"Ye hadn't better!"

"What shall we do with them, boys?" Dick asked.

"Take their clubs, and let them go," said Tom. "We don't want to shoot them, and we don't want them to molest us."

"That is a good idea," said Dick. Then to the leader he said: "You may go. But I would advise you not to try to follow us. You might get hurt, if you did."

A growl of anger was the only reply, but the six Tories turned and strode away, and soon disappeared behind a rise in the ground.

Then the patriot youths gathered up the clubs and set out on their quest, but going in almost the opposite direction from the Tories, who were headed toward Charleston.

The youths kept on two or three hours, when suddenly, just as they emerged from the depths of a heavy forest growth and into a clearing, there suddenly appeared upon the opposite side of the open space scores of Indians, and immediately they were all about them and had the youths surrounded in less time than takes the telling.

Dick and Tom Dare and Ben Foster were hopelessly encompassed about by the redskins, and there was no possible chance of escape for them, or at least that is the way it seemed, for they judged that there were over a hundred of the Indians, at least.

That the redskins were on the warpath was evident, for they were painted up, and wore their war headdress.

The situation of the patriot youths was indeed serious, and they had had enough experience with the Indians to know that their fate might be a terrible one.

CHAPTER VII

Miller and the Renegade

MILLER and his adversary struggled there, fiercely, on the narrow path leading to the mainland from Snow Island in the swamp.

The man made no outcry, which was proof to Martin's mind that Indians were not in hearing distance. This was a single scout that had come on a reconnoitering expedition, undoubtedly, and the fact that he had found the path in the darkness made Miller believe that he must have had knowledge of the path before. And likely he knew of the island.

Miller found his opponent to be a powerful man, and the struggle was a fierce one indeed, with the issue in doubt for a while, and then Miller managed to shove the redskin off into the bog at the side of the path, at the same time breaking his adversary's hold.

Miller remained on the path, and could just see the form of his vanquished opponent, who was struggling energetically to get back onto the path.

Then the patriot was suddenly amazed to hear the man say, in a voice of terror: "Oh, say, help me outer here, Mister! I don't wanter be pulled down inter th' bog. Giv' me yer han'. Ye kin reach me."

Miller was almost paralyzed, for he knew by the way the man was dressed, that he was made up like an Indian. And he was not an Indian at all, but a white man, painted up. He was undoubtedly a renegade, and they are worse than the savages themselves.

"You fraud!" said Miller, scathingly. "So you're not an Indian, eh? Well, I'll pull you out of there, if you'll go back to camp with me without making any further attempt to resist me."

"I'll go right along with ye," was the eager reply. "I know this bog, an' I'd go right straight on down to Chiny, unless I had help."

"Swear you will go with me and not attempt to escape."

"I swear. Give me your hand quick."

Miller did so, and the renegade seized hold of

it and began to pull with all his power, in an effort to get his feet and legs free from the bog, Miller leaning back and bracing himself, and thus managing to keep from being pulled into the bog himself.

Slowly but surely the renegade was pulled toward the path, and in a few minutes he was again on the solid ground, where he sank down, panting.

"Lemme rest a few minnets," said the man, in a wheezing voice. "I'm — almos'— tired — out."

"How did you happen upon this path?" asked Miller.

"I knowed about et," was the reply. "I've been all through these swamps, lots uv times, an' I knowed thar was a path to Snow Islan', an' I was just simply going to go over thar an' reconnoiter."

"Well, you can come along with me, now, and see what General Marion has to say to you."

"Yas, jest as soon as I git rested."

Miller waited a few minutes, and then the renegade began scrambling to his feet. Miller was between the fellow and the mainland and said, sternly:

"Now go right ahead on the path. Don't try any tricks, for if you do I'll —"

The renegade had risen to his feet, by this time, and at this moment he hurled himself against the patriot, knocking him off the path, into the bog.

"Thar! See how ye like et yerself!" cried the renegade, in a voice of triumph. Evidently his sense of honor and gratitude were both entirely lacking. "An' ye bet I ain't goin' to pull ye out, like ye did me," he continued, "Ye can go on down to Chiny, fur all I care. Good-by."

Then Miller heard the renegade making his way along the path, and in spite of all he could do, Miller could not free his feet from the clinging suction of the bog. They were held as if in a vise.

He struggled fiercely with the energy of despair, but could not make any headway toward getting his feet loose. A feeling of rage toward the renegade came over him, and he drew a pistol, leveled it in the direction from which came the sound of the departing renegade, and fired.

Crack! the weapon rang out, followed by a cry of pain, from the lips of the renegade.

"I hit him, anyway," exclaimed Miller, with a feeling of satisfaction. He listened a few mo-

ments, but heard no further sound, and so judged that the wound had not been serious, and that the renegade was slipping away, silently, to avoid the risk of being hit by another bullet.

Miller now turned his attention once more to the task of trying to get free from the bog, but quickly realized that he could not do so unaided, so he called loudly for help, in the hope that he would be heard by his comrades on the island, and that some of them would come to his assistance.

He fired another pistol-shot, a few minutes later, and then again yelled loudly for help.

Slowly he sank however, deeper and deeper into the bog, and he was down to his waist by the time that he heard voices in the direction of the island.

"Some of the men are coming," thought Miller. "Well, I am glad of that."

"Hello!" came a call at that moment. "Is that you, Miller?"

"Yes," was the reply. "I'm in the bog, beside the path. Hurry, for I'm down to my waist."

"We'll be with you in a few moments," was the encouraging response.

"All right."

A little later, the patriots, four or five in number, were at the point, and they took hold of Miller's hands. They pulled with all their might, and slowly but surely drew him forth from the bog. Presently he was on the path beside them, and sank down, almost exhausted.

"How did you git into the bog, Miller?" asked one of the men.

"I was pushed in by a renegade," was the reply. And then, in answer to interested inquiries, Miller told them the story of his nearly fatal encounter with his adversary.

"An' ye think ye hit him when ye shot at him?" queried one of the patriots.

"He gave utterance to a cry of pain," was the reply. "But after that all was quiet, so I guess I didn't hurt him much."

"We'll make an examination," said another. "He may be lyin' somewhere on the path, wounded."

Two or three of the patriots, then made their way along the path, and explored it carefully till they reached the mainland, without having found the man. They returned presently, and told Miller that they could find nothing of the renegade.

"I guess you didn't hurt him much, and that he got away," said one.

"Likely," said Miller.

Then the patriots returned to the island, and Miller went to General Marion and made his report. Marion, when he learned that Miller had had an encounter with a white man painted up as an Indian, shook his head.

"That is bad," he said. "If there are many of the renegades, then the Indians are likely to do a good deal of damage in this region before they get through with it, for they are always worse when led by renegade white men."

"Yes, the outlaws can beat the redskins when it comes to viciousness," said Miller.

"And we are likely to be hemmed in here on the island, now that the renegade knows of our presence here," said the "Swamp Fox," a frown on his face.

"True," agreed Miller.

"I think we had better leave here to-night," said Marion. "By morning they will be waiting for us, and they outnumber us so greatly that we could not hope to break through their lines."

"You are right, General Marion."

"Yes. We will at once break camp and make

our way to the mainland, and go into camp at a safe distance from the point where the path joins the mainland."

He gave the order, and the men quickly made their preparations. They broke camp and made their way to the mainland, then to a point half a mile distant. Here they again went into camp, and remained there till morning, when Miller as soon as it was sufficiently light went to the edge of the swamp on a reconnoitering expedition.

To his surprise, there were no Indians to be seen anywhere near the point where the path connected with the mainland, and he wondered at it.

"That is queer," he said. "I supposed the outlaw would tell the Indians about the island, and that they would be here, ready to make their way along the path as soon as it was light enough for them to see."

Miller, after taking a careful survey all around, made his way along the path, looking carefully, and presently he stopped, knelt down, and looked intently at the ground. There he noted the dark stain that could only have been made by blood. And out in the bog, four or five feet distant, he saw a little twig standing perhaps a foot above the surface, but the twig was covered with the

mud of the bog, showing it had been forced down under by some heavy weight, and Miller shrewdly suspected that the bullet from his pistol had made a severe wound, that the renegade had fallen from the path into the bog, and likely had been pulled down to his death by the treacherous quicksand. This theory would account for the fact that there were no Indians here. The outlaw had not returned to them with his report.

Having come to this decision, Miller went back to camp and made his report to General Marion, who agreed with him as to the fate of the renegade.

"I guess it will be safe for us to return to our rendezvous on the island," he said. "And we will do so as soon as we have eaten breakfast."

An hour later they were back on the island, and they were glad that their rendezvous was still a secret from their adversaries.

CHAPTER VIII

In the Hands of the Indians

DICK, Tom and Ben, although realizing their great danger, stood there facing the redskins unflinchingly. They knew that they would make a better impression and likely be treated with less cruelty if they showed a bold front, than if they did not, but so far as that was concerned, they were naturally brave, and they were not frightened, though fully realizing the gravity of their situation. Still, they had been in so many dangerous situations in the years they had been members of the patriot army, and had always succeeded in making their escape, that they did not lose heart now.

"Ugh," grunted one of the redskins, glaring at the youths, "who are white boys?"

"We are on our way across to the west side of the State," said Dick. "We are Indians' friends."

"Ugh. Mebby so," was the reply, in a tone that indicated doubt in the Indian's mind.

"Yes, we are friendly to you people," said Dick.

Again the redskin grunted, and another said something to him, in the Indian tongue. To this he replied, after which there was considerable talk among the Indians, with the result that presently a couple of braves advanced to the youths and bound their wrists together behind their backs, using pieces of thongs cut from the hides of deer. Then their pistols were taken away from them, the Indians appropriating the weapons with expressions of satisfaction.

"What are you going to do with us?" asked Dick, addressing the Indian that had talked to them before.

"Take white boys to Injun village," was the reply.

"Which way from here?"

"Ugh, that way," pointing toward the west.

"Well, that's the direction we want to go."

The Indian made no reply, but the entire band of redskins started, and with the three youths in their midst, made their way through the forest, toward the west.

They kept onward till evening, and then came to a village. There were perhaps a hundred wigwams, and several campfires burning. The prisoners were placed in a wigwam near the center of the village, and a couple of braves were placed to guard them.

The three young patriots talked to one another in low tones, and tried to figure out some manner in which they could make their escape. But this would be difficult, they knew. Their wrists were tied, and they were under guard of a couple of warriors, so it would seem that there was no chance for them to elude their captors.

They were given food, presently, and a couple of braves stood guard over them with their own pistols while they ate, and when they had finished, their wrists which had been released were bound again, though Dick managed to hold his arms in such a position that they were not tied as tight as they before had been.

When the redskins had gone, Dick told his comrades that he believed he could get his wrists free, by working at them steadily for an hour or so, and Tom and Ben told him to go ahead and free his wrists if he could, and then to free theirs.

"I'll do the best I can," said Dick, and then

he went to work. He worked steadily and energetically for about an hour and a half, and at the end of that time he had succeeded in getting his wrists free. He at once began work on the thongs binding the wrists of Tom and Ben, and in about half an hour had their wrists free also.

"There," he said in a whisper. "Now that we have got our arms free, we can make an attempt to get out of the encampment. But it will be a difficult matter to do so without being discovered, I feel certain."

"Yes, so it will," said Tom. "But we will make the attempt, just the same."

Then, just as they were getting ready to leave the tent, the flap at the entrance was lifted, and the faces of several redskins appeared, one of the Indians having a torch in his hand, which lighted up the interior of the wigwam.

The Indians discovered that the youths' hands were free, and with cries of amazement and anger, they leaped within, and seized hold of the youths.

Disappointed by their failure to get away, after having got their hands free, the three patriot youths fought fiercely, and for a few minutes there was a lively fight in the wigwam. Other

Indians, hearing the noise of the combat, however, came rushing to the assistance of their brother braves, and soon the youths were overpowered, their wrists were bound again, and they were dragged out of the wigwam and to the center of the village, where was a great crowd of braves, and also squaws and pappooses.

The youths looked about them with seeming indifference. They had fought a good fight, and they were defiant. They would not let the redskins have the satisfaction of thinking they had aroused a feeling of fear in their hearts, which indeed they had not.

"I wonder what they are going to do with us?" said Tom.

"Burn us at the stake, likely," was Ben's discouraging reply.

"I think not," said Dick. "There are no stakes prepared anywhere around here. They have some other plan of torture, doubtless."

Presently the youths saw the warriors forming in two parallel lines, about five or six feet apart, and the lines were about fifty yards long, there being nearly a half hundred braves in each line. Dick turned to his companions, a sober look on his face, and said:

"I think I know what they intend doing."

"What?" queried Tom.

"They are going to make us run the gauntlet."

"I guess you are right, Dick," said Ben. "See, the braves have war-clubs and spears in their hands, and they doubtless intend to make us run along that lane, while they will pound us with the clubs and spears."

"Say, that will not be very interesting!" protested Tom, with a grimace.

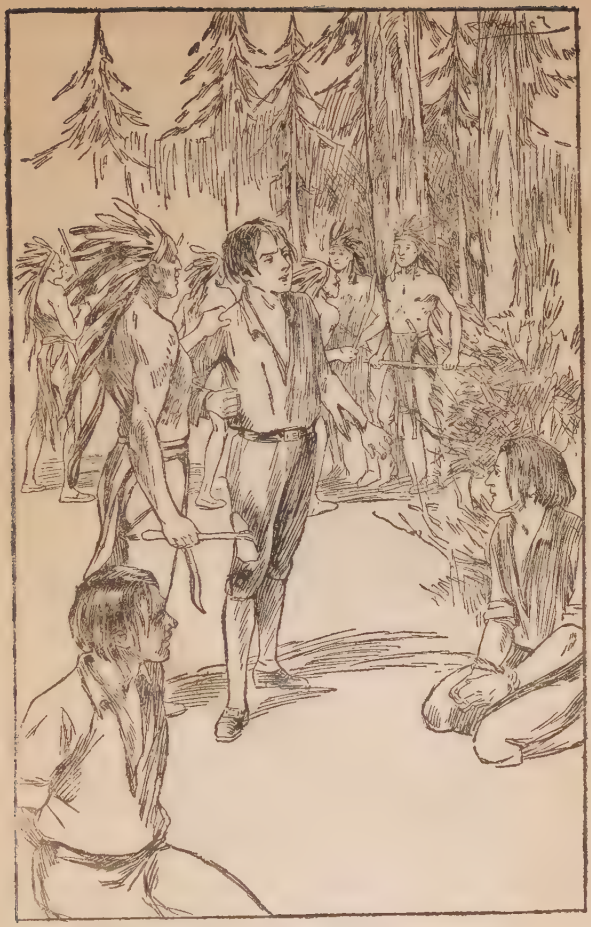
"It will be impossible to run the length of that lane and get through without being beaten to the ground," determined Dick.

"That's the way it looks to me," responded Ben. "But what can we do?"

When the lane had been formed the thongs were removed from Dick's wrists, and he was conducted to a point near the entrance to the lane. He had had only time for a few whispered words to Tom and Ben, and now one of the redskins who had brought him to this point, said to him:

"White boy run through lane, um go free. No git through, git pretty bad pounded with clubs, ugh."

"But you have no right to treat us in this man-



The Redskins called out "now"

ner," protested Dick. "We have done nothing against you."

"Injuns on warpath," was the grim reply. "Kill all white people that git hold uv, ugh."

Dick was about twenty paces from the end of the lane, and the Indians now let go their hold of him, and the spokesman said, gruffly: "White boy run fast, an' mebby um git through lane. No run, git burned at stake, ugh. When Injun say, 'now,' white boy run."

"All right," said Dick. He had a plan however he intended to try out and he wished to allay any suspicion in the minds of the savages. Instead of an attempt to run through the lane, he proposed the desperate alternative of a dash for liberty.

A few moments passed, and then the redskin called out, in a quick, gruff voice: "Now!"

Dick, at the word, leaped forward and ran straight toward the lane of death. On he dashed, and as he drew near the end of the lane, the redskins, fiendish grins of satisfaction and anticipation on their faces, raised their clubs on high and got ready to deal him fierce blows.

CHAPTER IX

A Rescue Foiled

ON the same day that found Dick and Tom Dare and Ben Foster in the Indian village, and about to be made to run the gauntlet, a company of patriot soldiers was making its way through the forest, not very far distant.

The company was one that had been sent out from Charleston by General Lincoln a couple of weeks before the siege had been inaugurated, and having finished the work it had been sent to do, it had started on its return, only to hear, while yet fifty or sixty miles distant, of the capture and surrender of the patriot forces and the city.

The captain, James Hickford, had been puzzled to know what to do, but after some thought, decided to try to find the "Swamp Fox" and his party, and join forces with him.

That was what he was doing now, looking for Marion. But he had not heard any news of Marion, at all, and did not know whether he would find him or not. He would keep on hunting, however, for he did not care to start North with his one company, but would prefer to remain in the South and accomplish some good for the patriot Cause if opportunity was afforded.

With the company was an old settler, who had attached himself to the company as scout and guide. This was when it had gone inland, and he had decided to join the patriot army permanently now, as scout and spy. This man's name was Zeke Mullin, and on the day of which we write, he had been sent ahead, by Captain Hickford, to do some scouting and reconnoitering.

He had discovered an Indian village about the middle of the afternoon, and had crawled up close, and had watched till he had ascertained that there were only squaws, children and a few old men in the village. Then he had turned and made his way back toward the camp of the patriot soldiers, and when he had gone about two miles, he came upon the band of Indians. He had come very near being discovered, but by quick work had avoided being seen. He had

darted back into the underbrush and had concealed himself behind a tree, where he stood watching the redskins as they made their way past.

When he saw that the Indians had three white men prisoners, he became especially interested.

"That's too bad," he murmured. "They'll most likely torture them poor fellows, unless we can rescue them, and I don't know how we can do that."

He stood, gazing after the Indians for a few minutes, a thoughtful expression on his face, and then he turned and hastened in the direction of the patriot encampment as fast as he could go.

In a couple of hours he was there, went at once to Captain Hickford, told him about seeing a large band of Indians, and that they had three white prisoners.

"Three white boys prisoners, you say, Zeke?" exclaimed the captain. "We must try to rescue them."

"That's what I think, sir," was the reply. "But I don't see how we are going to manage it. They've got three times as many men as we."

"We'll take them by surprise, Zeke," was the reply.

"We can try it, sir, but it's hard work taking redskins by surprise, Captain Hickford."

"I suppose so, but we must try to save those boys, anyhow."

"We had better break camp and start right away, then," said Zeke. "It'll be dark by the time we git to the vicinity of the village."

"We will start just as soon as possible," said the captain, and then he gave the order to break camp.

The men lost no time in doing so, and in about half an hour they were marching in the direction of the Indian village, Zeke Mullin in the lead, as guide.

On they went, for about an hour, and then suddenly Zeke called a halt.

"What's the trouble, Zeke?" asked Captain Hickford.

"I seen some men ahead of us, in the timber, captain," was the reply. "And I believe that they are Redcoats."

"Go ahead and reconnoiter, Zeke," said the captain. "We don't want to run into any trap."

"I'll see who they are, and learn how many there are of them, sir." Zeke set out at once, and made his way forward through the woods, till

he got in range of the persons he had seen, and then he discovered that it was a large force of British and Tories, at least three hundred. He was peering around a tree, looking at them, and wasn't paying much attention to what was going on to the right or the left of him, and the first he knew there sounded the sharp crack of a rifle, and a bullet whistled past his ear, causing him to duck his head.

He looked in the direction from which the shot had sounded, and saw a man standing about seventy-five yards distant, a smoking rifle in his hands.

The soldiers, who had been sitting in groups about a hundred yards distant, now came running toward Zeke, and he whirled and ran with all his might back toward the encampment of the patriot soldiers.

As soon as he came in hearing distance, he began calling out loudly: "Run, men! Run, quickly. The Redcoats are coming!"

The patriot soldiers leaped to their feet, but did not run, at once. The captain told them to shelter themselves behind trees and give the approaching enemy a volley.

"We can retreat afterwards," he said.

So the patriot soldiers did as ordered, and poured a volley into the advancing force, killing several and wounding a number. This did not stop the advance of the Redcoats, however; in fact, they came on faster than ever, and they fired a volley as they came, the bullets rattling all around the patriots.

"Fall back slowly, and load as you go," ordered Captain Hickford, and the men obeyed.

And then ensued a moving battle that lasted till evening, and by that time the patriot force was several miles from the Indian village that they had started to reach.

As the dusk of the evening descended, the British stopped the pursuit of the patriots, who on their part stopped also, but they had not much more than done so, when Zeke Mullin caught sight of some men behind them.

"We are hemmed in!" he cried, excitedly. "There are Redcoats on both sides of us!"

Captain Hickford was startled, but a few moments later he was relieved as well to see a man advancing, carry a flag of truce.

The captain himself went to meet the truce-bearer, and when they were close together, the captain called out: "Who are you?"

"Patriots," was the reply. "And I see by your uniform that you are a patriot also."

"Yes. Whose force do you belong to?"

"General Marion's."

"What! — the 'Swamp Fox?'"

"He is sometimes called that."

"And is he here?"

"Back about two hundred yards, with the rest of the men."

"How many men has he?"

"Sixty-five."

"Is that all?" in surprise.

"Yes. How many men have you?"

"One hundred. It is a company of patriot soldiers."

"Under whose command?"

"Mine — Captain Hickford."

"Ah, glad to make your acquaintance, Captain Hickford. And now, order your men to advance and join our force."

Captain Hickford did so, and soon the two forces were together, and Captain Hickford and Francis Marion, the "Swamp Fox," were asking and answering questions.

The "Swamp Fox" suggested that Captain Hickford and his company join his force. The

captain said that was the very thing that he wanted to do, and so it was settled.

"My second in command, Lieutenant Miller, has been taken ill and has gone to his home."

"I should like to take his place," said Captain Hickford, "and do you suppose we could rescue those three white men from the Indians?" he asked.

"We will try," said Marion, and a few minutes later they set out in the direction of the Indian village, but had gone only about a mile when they encountered the force of British, and were fired upon by the picket line.

The patriots returned the fire, and the crack, crack of the weapons rang out loudly on the night air.

CHAPTER X

Trailing the Redskins

THE engagement between the combined forces of Marion and Hickford and the British force continued as long as they could see each other, and when it grew too dark, the patriot force slowly and cautiously withdrew, while the British force went into camp.

The patriots retired a distance of half a mile, where they paused and Marion and Hickford held a council.

"What shall we do?" asked Marion.

"I would like to rescue those three white boys from the hands of the Indians, sir," was the reply.

"Well, if your man can find the village in the darkness, we can make a detour and get around the British force."

"He can find it in the darkness, I am sure. He is a splendid scout."

"Very good, then. We will start at once."

So the combined forces set out again, following the guidance of Zeke Mullin, and a little while before midnight they came upon the village.

There were redskin sentinels out, however, and immediately discovered the approach of the enemy and gave the alarm. A few shots were exchanged and the Indians could be seen getting ready for battle.

Again Marion and Hickford held a council.

"If there are two hundred of the redskins, we will have to exercise great care," said Marion. "The redskins are good at this kind of fighting."

"True," agreed Hickford. "We will have to fight them in their own fashion, every soldier fighting as an individual, and creeping up on the redskins, and sheltering himself behind trees and rocks as best he can."

"That is the only way to fight Indians."

So they gave the order to their men to fight as individuals, each exercising his own judgment and fighting to his own best advantage, while at the same time inflicting all the damage possible on the redskins.

This suited the soldiers, and they obeyed orders, and at once the slow advance was begun.

The Indians quickly extinguished the fires, however, making it very dark, and it became practically a waste of bullets to fire into the darkness, and so the word was sent around to the men to hold their positions till morning, when the battle would be resumed.

The soldiers got together in little groups, and while one stood guard, the rest slept, and when morning came, they were fresh and ready for the battle.

With the coming of daylight, the patriots opened fire, and began pouring bullets into the Indian village. They kept this up a few minutes, and not receiving any answers to their shots, they became suspicious. Under orders Zeke Mullin crept forward, but returned presently, and reported that the village was empty.

"Thar is not an Indian in it," he said. "They skipped out in the night."

"They judged by some means that we were too strong a force for them," said the "Swamp Fox."

"Likely you are right," agreed Hickford.

"Can you follow their trail, Mullin?" asked Marion.

"Oh, yes, I sure can," was the reply. "It's

so plain there need be no difficulty on that score."

"All right, then, Captain Hickford, what do you say to going in pursuit?"

"I am in favor of doing so," was the reply.

"Very well, then. We will have breakfast first and then be off."

The order was given, and in a few minutes the men were cooking their morning meal at hastily-kindled fires, and when they had eaten, they set out through the forest, following Mullin, who went ahead, his eyes on the trail left by the Indians.

Slowly and steadily they proceeded, and at noon they stopped and ate their noonday rations.

"How is the trail now, Zeke?" asked Hickford.

"Getting fresher, Captain Hickford."

"How near are we to the redskins, now?"

"I should say within three miles of them."

"We ought to overtake them by the middle of the afternoon, then."

Mullin shook his head, and looked dubious. "We are getting up in the hill country, as you can see," he said, "and the redskins are good travelers there. If we catch up with them by nightfall, we will be doing pretty well."

"Oh, well, we will catch them sooner or later."

Then the patriot force set out, with Mullin in the lead, and they kept on the trail of the Indians all the afternoon, and when evening came Zeke said the redskins were still a mile in the lead.

"But they will go into camp soon, without doubt," he said. "They won't keep on going all night."

"We will stop for supper," said Hickford, "and meantime, Zeke, you might go on ahead and see if you can get them located."

"Very well, Captain Hickford," and Zeke set out, quickly disappearing.

The soldiers cooked and ate their suppers, and they had just finished when Mullin put in an appearance.

"Well?" said Hickford, as the scout drew near.

"The Injuns have gone into camp about two miles from here," said Mullin.

"Ah, then we can make an attack."

Mullin shook his head. "I don't believe it'll do any good," he said.

"Why not?"

"Because the redskins have retreated into a

little valley, of not more'n four or five acres area, and the valley is entirely surrounded by high and perpendicular walls, that is, excepting at one point, where there's a little brook runs out through a narrow passage not more'n five or six feet wide. I know the place and the Injuns can hold it against us as long as they want to."

"But, can't we get up on the top of the walls and shoot down at them?"

"They can get in close to the foot of the wall, and we can't hit 'em. And it's too far to shoot across the valley."

Hickford turned to the "Swamp Fox," and asked: "What do you think about the matter, General Marion?"

"I think it will be hard to do the redskins much injury," he said. "They are now on their own ground, and will be able to make a strong fight, owing to their strong position."

"What would you suggest?"

"Well, in my opinion, it will be best to wait till morning, and then review the situation."

"Very well, that is what we will do. But, I very much fear that the white boys that Zeke saw in their hands have been put to death already."

Marion nodded, a grave look on his face. "Yes, there is more than a probability that such is the case," he said. "But the best we can do is to wait till morning. We could do nothing to-night."

"I judge that you are right."

Sentinels were stationed, and the soldiers presently lay down and went to sleep. After rations the next morning, they broke camp, and under the guidance of Mullin, made their way to the rim of the wall overlooking the valley in which the Indians had taken refuge.

Sure enough, over near the mouth of the little ravine, through which the brook ran, in under the wall, which projected to such an extent as to make almost a large cave at the foot, were encamped the Indians. They were too far away for the bullets from rifles or muskets to reach them, and they could not be hit from above, nor did it seem possible to force an entrance by way of the narrow ravine.

Marion and Hickford took in the situation, and after gazing for a few minutes, turned toward each other, their brows wrinkled.

"What do you think about it, General Marion?" asked Hickford.

"It looks as if there is no way to get at the redskins," was the reply.

The Indians had discovered the patriot soldiers, and now they gave utterance to wild, defiant yells, and waved their weapons derisively.

"They are insolent," said Hickford.

"Yes, and — look! There are the three white prisoners!"

Sure enough, six redskins, two to each prisoner, had just led the three patriot youths, Dick and Tom Dare, and Ben Foster out, where they could be seen by the soldiers.

CHAPTER XI

The Night Trail

WHEN Dick Dare started to run the gauntlet, as he had been ordered to do by the redskins, he had made up his mind definitely that he would not do so, if he could help it.

So when he was within three or four yards of the end of the lane, he suddenly turned sharply to the left and dashed away with all his might, with the thought that perhaps he might succeed in breaking through the line of Indians and make his escape.

He ran swiftly, but was quickly intercepted by a score of redskins, who grabbed him and threw him to the ground, and quickly bound his wrists with thongs.

Then they led him back to where his comrades stood, and while the Indians were doing a lot of excited jabbering, the youths talked together.

"I was afraid you wouldn't be able to make your escape, Dick," said Ben.

"So was I," said Dick, "but I made up my mind to try it, anyway. I wonder if they are going to make another attempt to force me to run the gauntlet?"

"One of us anyway. See they are getting the line ready again," said Tom.

"So they are."

Just at this moment, however, there sounded the crack, crack of firearms.

The youths uttered exclamations.

"What is that?" exclaimed Tom.

"Some force is attacking the Indians," asserted Dick.

"Yes," said Ben. "I hope that they will capture the redskins and set us free."

"So do I," Tom hopefully assented.

Dick said the same, and then their guards acting under orders of the chief led them back to the wigwam that they had before been confined in.

All was quiet in the Indian village now, for an hour or so, and the patriot youths were beginning to get sleepy, when they heard sounds in the camp. There had been no more firing, but presently six braves entered, and conducted the youths out of the tent.

"What is going on?" asked Dick.

"Come along, an' don't make talk," grunted one of the redskins.

The youths soon learned that the entire Indian band was slipping quietly away, was leaving the encampment, and they knew that it was being done because the Indians feared the force that had made the attack.

"It must be a pretty strong force, then," said Dick.

"Yes, or the redskins wouldn't run away in the night to avoid them," said Ben.

"I hope the force follows us," said Tom.

"Likely it will do so," said Dick.

"White boys shut up," growled the Indian that spoke broken English. "White men no foller. Git killed, if um do. No free white boys, ugh."

"Why are you slipping away from them, then?" asked Tom.

"We goin' to village up in hills, anyhow," said the redskin.

"You took a sudden notion," chuckled Tom, who could joke, even though he was a prisoner.

"Keep still. No talk," growled the Indian.

They traveled till past midnight, and then they

went into camp. They were up early, however, and again set out, and kept onward till noon, when they stopped about an hour, for food, and to rest.

Then on again, till at about half-past four in the afternoon they entered a narrow ravine encompassed between high walls. A little brook rippled down the ravine, and part of the way they had to wade in the water. Then, presently they emerged into a valley of four or five acres, surrounded by a wall about two hundred and fifty feet in height.

"This is an ideal place for holding another force at bay," said Dick.

"Yes, so it is," agreed Tom.

"I don't believe a force ten times as strong as the Indian band could get into this valley," said Ben.

"Likely not," agreed Dick.

"Our rescue at the hands of the men that attacked the Indians last night, even if they follow, is very doubtful," said Tom.

"Yes, it would be a difficult matter to get at us," admitted Dick. "We must try to help ourselves."

The youths were placed in a sort of cave, a

recess well in under the wall, near the mouth of the ravine, and an Indian was placed on guard over them.

They discussed their situation, but could not see much chance for betterment. They felt that there was not much hope that the men who had attacked the Indians would be able to rescue them.

When their food was brought in to them, they ate it in silence, and did not ask the Indians any questions. They realized that nothing the redskins might say could be depended on, and they felt, anyway, that their escape from the hands of the Indians was very doubtful. They were naturally despondent as a result.

When the redskins had withdrawn, the youths talked a while, and then became silent. After a period, they lay down, and in spite of the fact that they considered their situation desperate, they were soon asleep, and they slept soundly till morning.

When food was brought to them in the morning, they asked if there were any signs of the white men that had attacked them the night before, at the village.

The Indians shook their heads.

"I'm afraid that they didn't follow," said Tom.

"And even if they did, they couldn't get us out of the Indian's hands, likely," said Ben.

"We'll hope for the best, anyhow," said Dick.

About two hours later half a dozen braves entered, seized hold of the youths and conducted them out of the cave. A few paces from the face of the wall, a chief pointed to the top of the wall, over near the farther side, and grunted.

The youths looked, eagerly, and saw a large force of patriot soldiers standing on the summit of the elevation. Exclamations of joy escaped their lips.

"They did follow, sure enough!" exclaimed Tom.

"No do white boys any good," growled the chief. "White men can no git white boys 'way from Injuns."

"That remains to be seen," mused Dick.

"Ugh," grunted the chief. "If palefaces were thick as the leaves on the trees, they could no git white boys 'way from Injuns. They no can git into valley."

"It looks that way, true," admitted Dick. "But they may find a way of entering, in spite of you."

"No can do it," said the chief. "An' if um try, we tie white boys to stakes an' burn um, ugh."

This was said in such a cold-blooded, matter-of-fact way that the blood of the youths ran cold as they listened. They exchanged glances, in which was a look of almost despair.

The men on the top of the wall waved their hands, evidently in order to encourage the prisoners, and then the redskins hustled the youths back into the cave.

"It looks as if death at the stake is to be our portion," said Tom.

And again Dick said bravely: "We'll hope for the best, boys."

CHAPTER XII

The Fight in the Ravine

"WE must manage to rescue those three captives from the Indians," said Marion, as they saw the three prisoners led forth from the cave.

"Yes," said Hickford. "It will be difficult, however."

"We will try to force our way into the valley to-night."

"Yes, but it will be a dangerous undertaking."

"True. Two hundred Indians ought to be able to stand off an army."

"Yes, but perhaps by keeping up a steady firing we may be able to advance gradually, and finally force our way into the valley."

"We will make the attempt, at any rate."

They went into camp near the edge of the

precipice, and a couple of sentinels were stationed on the wall, where they could keep an eye on the Indians.

When evening came, the Indians were taking matters quietly. They had braves stationed on guard at the entrance to the valley, and did not fear being taken by surprise. The alarm could be given, and they could be on hand at the mouth of the ravine in a very few moments.

The soldiers in the patriot force up on the top of the wall cooked and ate their suppers, and then sat and talked till nightfall, when they began making preparations for an attack.

When they were ready, they set out, and presently reached the entrance to the ravine, and began moving slowly up it.

They advanced very slowly and cautiously, for they wished to get as near the entrance to the valley as possible before being discovered by the enemy.

They followed the windings of the little brook, and here and there had to wade in the water. They did not mind this, however, as it was warm weather.

On they went, and presently they saw a faint glimmer of light ahead, and knew that they must

be nearing the end of the ravine. The light was from a campfire that was back in under the wall.

Then suddenly there sounded a shot, and a bullet whistled past the head of Captain Hickford.

"They have discovered our approach," he exclaimed. "Open fire, men, and make every shot count, if possible."

The men obeyed, and did as they had been instructed to do, viz., only a few fired at a time, and by taking turns in this manner, they were enabled to keep up a constant fire, there being a sufficient number of groups so that those that had fired first had time to reload before the others had finished.

They saw shadowy forms near the mouth of the ravine, and fired at these, but they could not tell whether they did any damage. They kept advancing, slowly but steadily, however, which was that much gained.

The Indians were firing at the whites, now, both with bullets and arrows, only about half their number having firearms. These latter had been taken from settlers and soldiers who had been killed by the Indians or, as was the case

with the Dare Boys and Ben Foster, had fallen into their hands.

The soldiers managed to keep on advancing, however, until they were within fifty yards of the entrance to the valley, and then the bullets and arrows came so thick that Marion and Hickford, after a brief conference, decided to give the order to retreat. The Indians, sheltered at either side of the ravine, could fire and not expose themselves, while the soldiers, had they advanced, would have to take the bullets and arrows without protection, as there were no trees or bushes, nor rocks large enough to afford protection.

Several of the soldiers had already received wounds that were more or less serious, and at the word from their commanders the men of the two commands retreated, though slowly, for they hated to retreat, and, too, they took their wounded with them.

When they were back at camp, they dressed the wounds of the injured, and then awaited the determination of their commanders as to the future moves.

"It would seem that it is not going to be practicable to force our way into the valley,"

said the "Swamp Fox," as he and Captain Hickford sat in their tent, talking.

"Yes, so it would seem," was the reply. "We made a determined attempt, and failed."

"True. I don't believe we could make a much more determined effort than the one we just made."

"That's the way it seems to me."

They were silent a while, each busy with his thoughts, and then presently Hickford said: "Perhaps there is another way of entering the valley."

"I hardly think so," said Marion. "If there was, I should think the Indians would have discovered it."

"Likely. Well, why can't we make another way of entering, then?"

The "Swamp Fox" wrinkled up his forehead and pondered. "If we could do that," he said, "and could enter at the farther side and come across and make an attack before they knew of our presence, taking them by surprise, we ought to be able to defeat them."

"Mullin is a fine scout," said Hickford, "perhaps he might suggest some way of entering, and he can go and make a careful examination

around the wall. He might find a way of making an entry."

"True. And you might see what he has to say about it, Captain Hickford."

"I will do so."

Zeke Mullin was summoned, and Hickford explained to him what was wanted. Mullin listened, and then nodded. "I'll do my best," he said. "But I might as well wait till mornin'. I couldn't do much in the dark."

"Very well. Get at it the first thing after breakfast in the morning."

"I will do so, Captain Hickford."

The night passed quietly. After breakfast, in the morning, Mullin set out to look for some manner of reaching the valley, other than by way of the ravine guarded by the Indians.

Zeke was thorough, and he made his way slowly along the edge of the wall, observing closely. It was nearly noon by the time he had made the circuit. He had not found any way of getting down into the valley, and, somewhat disappointed, he made his way back to camp and reported to Hickford and Marion.

"You could not find a place where we can enter, then?" remarked Hickford.

"No, sir."

The two commanders looked at each other in a disappointed and perplexed manner.

"What shall we do?" asked Hickford.

"I guess we shall have to try again by way of the ravine," said the "Swamp Fox."

"I'll put in the afternoon scouting around, and reconnoitering the vicinity," said Mullin, "an' maybe I'll find some way uv gettin' into the valley, or think of a plan for doin' it."

"I hope that you may succeed," said the "Swamp Fox."

CHAPTER XIII

Dick Does Some Exploring

DURING the day that the patriot soldiers were encamped on the wall overlooking the valley, Dick and his fellow captives were kept close prisoners in the cave.

They had heard the battle between the Indians and the soldiers the night before, with pleasure, and their hopes had been raised high, to be dashed to earth again when the Indians returned and settled down to take things easy. After the battle, one of the Indians informed the youths that the soldiers had been defeated.

"We whip um," he said, with dignified air of satisfaction.

"Did you kill any of them?" asked Dick.

"Ugh, heaps uv um," was the reply.

"I don't believe you," said Tom.

"Injun tell truth," was the reply.

"How many Indians were killed?" asked Ben.

"Three or four. Injuns behind wall, an' no git hit much."

"And the soldiers had to retreat, eh?" said Ben.

"Ugh, heap run," was the reply, and the Indian strode out.

The youths looked at one another, by the faint light that penetrated into the cave from a torch near the entrance, and Tom said: "That old Indian was lying. The soldiers could not force an entrance, but I'll bet the Indians didn't kill very many of them."

"I hope that such is the case, anyhow," was Dick's reply.

"But our hopes of being rescued are growing slim," said Tom.

"Oh, I don't think that, Tom," said Dick. "The soldiers know we are here, prisoners, and they will not go away and leave us to our fate. They will stay till they get the better of the redskins and rescue us, I am certain."

"Do you think we could escape?" asked Tom, in a whisper.

"Hardly," said Dick. "Our wrists are bound tightly, and even if we could get our hands free,

there are two Indians on guard at the entrance, yonder, and we could not get past them without being seen."

"No," said Ben, "we will have to wait for the soldiers to get into the valley and thrash the Indians and set us free."

"Well, I hope they will succeed in doing that pretty soon," said Tom.

They talked quite a while, and then lay down and went to sleep, and in spite of the discomfort attached to having their wrists bound, they succeeded in sleeping pretty soundly.

Next morning, after breakfast, they again discussed their chances of being rescued, and they could not figure out anything very satisfactory in the situation.

"Perhaps by evening we shall know more about it," said Ben.

"Yes, the soldiers may make an important move and be able to strike the Indians a blow," said Dick.

Dick asked the Indian that brought their breakfast if the soldiers were still in camp on the top of the wall, and received a reply in the affirmative.

"Sojers there yit," was the reply.

"That is good news," said Tom.

"Ugh, let um stay," grunted the redskin. "They stay, an' mebby we git um — take um scalp, ugh."

Then he stalked out of the cave with grave face and dignified air.

"He's figuring on taking scalps, eh?" growled Tom, staring after the Indian angrily. "I guess they'd like to scalp all the soldiers, but I don't think they'll be able to do so. The soldiers are as strong in numbers as the redskins and will be able to hold their own."

"Yes, I think so," said Dick.

When their dinner had been brought to them, they talked to the redskin while they ate, and learned that there was no change in the situation. The soldiers were still in camp on the top of the wall, and did not seem to be doing anything.

"They 'fraid uv Injuns," said the brave.

"Afraid, nothing!" snorted Tom, when the redskin had gone. "Those soldiers are not afraid of the Indians. They're waiting for a chance to strike the redskins a blow that they will remember for a while."

"That is what I think," said Dick. "They are doing something, I am certain, though of

course they would keep it secret from the Indians, if possible."

"Of course," agreed Ben.

Dick now began working at his bonds. He pulled and tugged, and Tom asked what he was trying to do.

"I held my wrists in such a manner that the thong is not very tight," was the reply, "and I believe that I can manage to get my wrists free after a while."

"But, what good would that do? You said yourself that we could not slip past the sentinels at the entrance, even if we could get our arms free."

"True, and I am not going to try to slip past the sentinels."

"What are you going to try to do, then?" asked Tom, with interest.

"I noticed something last night when the torch was brought in. There is a draft of air from the rear of the cave and I'm going to see if I can find another way out."

"Another way out of the cave?" in surprise.

"Sh. Yes. There might be a connection with the outer air from the rear end of the cave."

Tom shook his head doubtfully. "There

might be, yes," he said, "but I don't think it likely."

"Then how about the light. Why should the flame be drawn always in one direction?"

"Now that you speak of it," said Ben. "I believe I can feel a current of air coming from the back of the cave."

"It will do no harm to look, anyway," said Dick. "There might be a passageway leading to the outer world."

Dick worked perseveringly, but the thongs were strong, and the knots had been tied rather tightly, and getting his wrists free was a harder job than he had expected. A sharp edged stone helped him some and he finally did succeed in getting them free, but it was pretty well on toward evening.

He took a survey toward the front of the cave, and noted that the two guards were lolling on the ground and paying no attention to the interior of the cave, so he rose to his feet and stole softly toward the inner end of the cave.

He looked back occasionally, and did not see any change in the positions of the redskins, so he knew he had not been heard.

He advanced deep into the cave, and finally

came to the solid rock. It was pretty dark back in there, and Dick had to feel his way about. He moved to the right, slowly, feeling all about, from the floor up to as high as he could reach, and presently he came to a narrow passage, that extended on deeper into the wall surrounding the valley.

Dick entered this passageway and made his way along it, slowly and carefully, for he did not know but he might encounter a crevice, into which, if he were to drop, he would plunge down perhaps hundreds of feet, to his death.

He had gone perhaps seventy-five yards, when he came to a solid wall of rock, which barred his progress. There were rough projections to the face of the rock, however, and Dick decided to climb upward as far as possible, in the hope that he would, at a higher level, find a continuation of the passageway. He was sure about the air current now. He could feel it plainly.

So he worked his way slowly upward, clinging to the rough knobs and projections, and using them for footholds, also, and presently he reached an opening, at a point which he judged was ten or twelve feet above the level of the cave-floor.

Dick found that the passageway continued onward again, but descended at a slight angle, and he made his way along it, slowly and carefully.

Suddenly, however, he stumbled over a good-sized rock and pitched forward upon his face before he could catch hold of anything to keep from falling, and he struck on an inclined surface, that proved to be smooth, and down which a considerable stream of icy cold water was pouring. He shot down the incline on his stomach at a swift pace, for the incline was at least forty-five degrees slant. Dick reached up and to either side, in an effort to stay his progress, but found that he was in a narrow trough, and that there was nothing to get hold of.

Downward he shot, a distance of twenty-five or thirty feet, he guessed, and then he left the end of the incline, being shot out of the trough by the momentum, and landed with a splash into an exaggerated basin of water.

Dick was somewhat bruised by the slide where his body struck against the rocks, but he was not seriously injured, his head not having struck against anything hard.

"Well, that beats anything I have encountered

anywhere," murmured the patriot youth, as he climbed from his unexpected bath to the nearest bank and rubbed his bruises. "I wonder what kind of a place I am in, now?"

He began feeling around him, and found that he was in what seemed, so far as he could determine by the sense of touch, to be a sort of pocket in the mountain. He was surrounded by solid walls, and the pocket could not be more than ten or twelve feet in diameter, while the end of the incline that he had shot down was not more than eight feet above his head.

There was no continuation of the passageway, nor could Dick climb up the perpendicular walls that surrounded him. Seemingly the only mode of egress from this pocket, so it seemed, was by way of the incline down which he had slid, but then there must be an exit for the water.

So feeling around, against the walls low down on one side, Dick made a discovery. At about two feet from the floor, he found an opening, and he could hear the ripple as of water running over rocks. In a moment more he had gotten through and found himself standing knee-deep in the waters of the brook that flowed below the ravine.

The point where he had emerged was about halfway from the junction of the ravine with the valley to the entrance to the ravine itself.

"Now to reach the patriot encampment and get them to come here with me and enter and make their way into the cave by the rear way," was Dick's thought.

He hastened down the ravine, and reaching its end, hurried in the direction of the camp of the soldiers.

CHAPTER XIV

A Surprise

AS he had said he would do, Zeke Mullin had put in the afternoon in reconnoitering the vicinity and trying to find some manner of getting into the valley, other than by way of the ravine.

He was not successful, however, and about supper time he came in and went to the tent occupied by General Marion and Captain Hickford.

"Well, what luck, Zeke?" asked the captain, eagerly.

"I didn't find any way of getting into the valley, Captain Hickford," was the reply. "It looks as if we'll have to go in by way of the ravine, or not at all."

"Well, we will stay here, keep a sharp watch

on the redskins, and perhaps we may get a chance to take them by surprise," said the "Swamp Fox."

"Yes," said Hickford. "I desire to stay here till we manage to strike the redskins a hard blow and rescue those three prisoners from their hands."

Zeke Mullin, after answering a few more questions, left the tent and joined the soldiers, who were busily engaged in cooking their suppers. After the evening meal, the soldiers sat around, some of them smoking, others lying at ease on their blankets, and presently darkness encompassed them about.

They did not fear an attack by the Indians, however, for there were sentinels stationed, and it would be impossible for the redskins to take them by surprise.

They asked Mullin if he thought they could find any other mode of entering the valley, then by way of the ravine, and he told them he did not think so.

"That's the only way to my way of thinking," he said. "We'll just have to keep pegging away and hold the redskins where they are."

At that moment they heard the signal of one of the sentinels, and a few moments later he ap-

proached the camp. By the light of the one campfire they saw that there was a stranger, a good-looking young fellow, with him.

The sergeant of the company rose as they approached, and to him the sentinel said: "Here is a young man that wants to see the captain and General Marion, sergeant. Will you conduct him to the tent? I must get back to my post."

"Of course," was the reply, and the sergeant leading the stranger to the tent, ushered him into the presence of the officers, who looked at the newcomer in some surprise, and with lively interest as well.

"Whom have you there, sergeant?" asked Captain Hickford.

"I didn't ask him," was the reply. "The sentinel just brought him into camp."

"My name is Dick Dare, sir," said the youth, "and I am one of the three prisoners that you saw in the hands of the Indians in the valley."

"What!" exclaimed Hickford, in amazement.

"How did you manage to escape?" cried Marion, eagerly.

"I will tell you, sirs, briefly," said Dick. And then he told the story of how he had managed to get away from the cave in the valley.

"That is great, General Marion," exclaimed Hickford, when they had heard all. "This young man has opened up a mode of entrance into the valley, for us!"

"So he has," agreed Marion. "It will be a slow and difficult manner of effecting an entrance, but we can accomplish it, I feel certain."

"Yes," said Dick. "We will need a couple of ropes of some length, one to hold to in making our way up the incline, and another about twenty or thirty feet long, to enable us to get down into the cave, from the passageway."

"We have the ropes," said Hickford.

"How soon will you make the entrance?" asked Dick, with eager interest.

"We can get to work at once," said General Marion.

"That pleases me," said Dick, "for my brother and a friend are in the cave, prisoners, you know, and I want to rescue them as soon as possible."

"We will go to work without delay," said Hickford. "Don't you think, General Marion, that it will be a good plan to have a number of our men advance near to the entrance to the valley, and keep up a steady fire on the Indians to

distract their attention while we are making our entrance?"

"Yes, that will be a good plan," was the reply.

Very soon the camp was astir, and the men were delighted when they learned what was on the tapis. They were eager to get at the Indians who had held them at bay.

A little later they entered the mouth of the ravine and stole cautiously along, till they came to the point where Dick found egress through a hole in the wall, and here the main body stopped, while about twenty of the soldiers advanced till within a controlling distance from the end of the ravine. They at once began a dilatory firing at the Indians, who promptly returned the fire, thinking the soldiers were making another attack.

And while the firing was going on, Dick, followed by the "Swamp Fox," Captain Hickford, and then the soldiers of both the forces, gradually entered, as fast as room was made for them in the little pocket.

Dick had told the soldiers to bring a limb of a tree about ten feet long, and they had done so, and this was leaned up against the wall, and as it had a number of projections, where limbs had been broken off, it was easy to climb to the in-

clined passage. This Dick managed to get to the top of, and here he tied the rope. Then it was easy for the soldiers one after another to climb up to the passage that led to the cave.

Then he made his way along the passage, slowly and carefully, followed by the soldiers, till he came to the point where the descent made necessary the use of the other rope. This was tied firmly, and Dick slid down to the passage, along which he made his way, and into the cave proper, to where Tom and Ben lay.

"Ah, you're back, Dick!" exclaimed Tom, in a low, but eager voice. "Did you find another way of getting out of the cave?"

"Yes," replied Dick. And then, after a careful look toward the entrance, where the two guards were stationed, he cut the thongs holding the youths' wrists. They rose to their feet and began chafing their wrists. And just then the soldiers began putting in an appearance, and but for a cautioning whisper from Dick, Tom and Ben would have uttered exclamations of amazement that might have attracted the attention of the guards at the entrance.

While the soldiers were coming, Dick explained matters to Tom and Ben, who expressed amaze-

ment at the story, but delight as well, and when all the soldiers were in the cave, back where it was dark, where they could not be seen by the guards, General Marion and Captain Hickford held a brief conference, and decided to advance to the entrance of the cave and make the attack on the Indians.

When the word was given, the soldiers, with the "Swamp Fox," Captain Hickford and the Dare Boys and Ben Foster in the lead, made their way cautiously toward the entrance of the cave.

They were discovered by the two guards as they came within the range of the light from a fire at one side of the entrance, and with wild yells, the Indians leaped out into the open, crying a warning to the others of their danger.

"Forward to the attack!" yelled the "Swamp Fox," and the soldiers, with loud cheers, dashed to the front of the cave and attacked the Indians furiously from the rear.

What followed could not be called a battle. It was an utter rout of a thoroughly disconcerted foe.

CHAPTER XV

Dick's Story of the Siege

PERHAPS those Indians had been surprised on various occasions in their lives, prior to this time, but there can be little doubt that this was the great surprise of their existence. To be suddenly attacked by a strong force of soldiers, from the rear, and the interior of the valley, when they had been constantly guarding what they believed to be the only possible point of entry, was certainly sufficient to astonish them. In truth it nearly paralyzed them, and they did not put up the fight that they otherwise might have done.

They must have guessed that the firing up the ravine was a ruse, after they were attacked from the rear, for they made a break into the ravine and ran swiftly along it, paying no attention to the

scattering shots that greeted them. Nor did they make any effort to return the fire of the soldiers in the ravine. The Indians were panic stricken, and were intent only on making their escape, so they had no desire to risk their lives to stop and take a scalp or two while retreating.

After the fleeing redskins now went the soldiers, and they kept firing at the fugitives, and continued the chase till the Indians emerged from the ravine and scattered in among the trees. Then they returned to the valley.

They had not lost a man, though several were slightly injured, and had to be attended at the camp. There their wounds were dressed, and they were made comfortable.

Then, when all was quiet in the camp, General Marion and Captain Hickford sent for the three youths, who made their way to the tent at once. They took seats, and General Marion proceeded to question them.

"Where are you young men from?" he asked.

"From Charleston, sir," replied Dick.

"Ah, from Charleston? When did you leave there?"

Dick told him.

"Was that before the surrender?"

"No," said Dick. "We left there the day after the surrender."

"What were you doing in Charleston?"

"We were fighting against the British, sir. We are patriot soldiers and have been for several years."

"Ah, indeed. Where have you fought mostly?"

"Mostly in the North, though we have also fought through one or two campaigns in Virginia and North Carolina, and now in South Carolina."

"Then you were in Charleston through the siege," said the "Swamp Fox," eyeing the youths with interest.

"Yes, sir."

"What did you do?"

"We worked as one of the shifts in a battery," was the reply. "That is, till it got knocked to pieces, and then we took our muskets and lay in a trench and did what we could in that manner."

"Tell us the story of the siege," said Marion. "We have heard only rumors from people that had had the story from others that had not seen the battles."

"Very well, sir." And then Dick told the

story of the siege of Charleston. He told it in such an interesting and striking manner that his hearers were thrilled, and listened eagerly and intently. When he had finished, the "Swamp Fox" and Hickford drew long breaths and looked at each other.

"I wish I had been there with my company," said the captain.

"Yes," said Marion, "though if you had been you would have been made prisoners, the same as the rest of the army. Now that you are here with me, I am rather glad that you were not in Charleston during the siege."

"I suppose you young men will join our forces?" said Captain Hickford, addressing the youths.

"Yes," said Dick. "We came inland on purpose to look for General Marion's force. We did not know anything about your whereabouts so did not expect to find your company here."

"We shall be glad to have you with us," said Marion. The fact was, that, being a good judge of men, he had taken quite a fancy to the three young patriots. They were handsome and manly-looking, and he had seen enough of them to know that they were brave.

"And we shall be glad to stay with you, for a while, at least, and do what we can for the Cause," said Dick.

They talked a while longer, then the youths saluted and went to the quarters assigned them with Captain Hickford's company.

Next morning, after an early breakfast, the soldiers broke camp and set out for the rendezvous of the Swamp Fox on Snow Island in the great swamp.

They reached their destination that evening, and went into camp, and Marion and Hickford began planning a campaign, which would enable them to get after foraging parties of Redcoats from Charleston, and parties of Tories and guerrillas, and thus render assistance to the patriots of this part of the country.

Dick and Tom Dare and Ben Foster, being young and lively, and exceedingly good-natured, soon made friends with Hickford's soldiers, as well as with the men under the "Swamp Fox." They became the life of the encampment, the men all taking a great liking to them.

"I believe that those Dare Boys and Ben Foster are going to be valuable additions to our force," said Marion, one evening, as they were

seated in their cabin, talking of their future plans.

"Yes, I think so," agreed Hickford. "It seems to me that I have heard of the Dare Boys before, though I don't remember just what it was that I heard regarding them."

"It seems to me that I have heard of them too," said Marion. "It was somebody by the name of Dare that was a great scout and spy under General Washington, up North, I believe. But that could hardly have been one of these youths."

"Probably not," said Hickford, "though they are bright young fellows."

The next time Dick was in their presence, they asked him if he had ever done any scout or spy-work under the commander-in-chief, and Dick replied that he had.

"Then you are the spy by the name of Dare that did such great work for Washington?" exclaimed Marion.

"I know of no one else named Dare," said Dick, modestly.

CHAPTER XVI

Making It Lively for the Redcoats

GENERAL MARION and Captain Hickford were glad that they had Dick Dare with them. Now that they knew about his scout and spywork, they believed that he would be of use to them in the same capacity.

"Mullin is a good scout, being well versed in woodcraft," said Hickford. "But he would not be able to do any real spywork, where we wished to secure information regarding the British in a town or city.

"I shall be glad to attempt any work you may give me to do," said Dick.

After some further conversation, Dick rejoined his comrades. The three patriot youths were now perfectly at home among the soldiers of the forces under the "Swamp Fox" and Hickford,

and they felt that they would enjoy a campaign with this little force.

Now the "Swamp Fox" and Captain Hickford began a lively campaign. They would stay in the encampment on Snow Island in the swamp, till they heard of a party of Redcoats or Tories in the vicinity, and then they would sally forth, strike the party a severe blow and then get quickly back into the swamp again.

For two or three weeks they kept this up, causing such trouble among the British foraging parties that General Cornwallis, in Charleston, was asked to send a strong force into the interior in the vicinity of the swamps, to try to run the "Swamp Fox" to earth and capture him and destroy his force.

Cornwallis sent a force of five hundred men into the country, and it went into camp within three miles of the rendezvous on Snow Island.

The British did not know anything about the lay of the land, but they had some Tory scouts who claimed to know the country thoroughly, and the commander of the force, Colonel Holt, told them to hunt till they discovered the rendezvous of the "Swamp Fox" and to give him the information as soon as secured, when he would

advance and strike the "Swamp Fox" a blow that would put him out of business.

Dick Dare, who was out on a reconnoitering expedition, happened onto the British encampment within an hour of the time it went into camp, which was in the evening, a little before supper time. He crept up close, to spy on the enemy and size up the strength of the force, and, standing behind a tree, he gazed searchingly at the British soldiers.

"There are at least five hundred soldiers," he murmured. "That is a pretty strong force, but I believe that by taking it by surprise, we can make them wish they had stayed in Charleston."

He turned and stole away, and in an hour was in camp at Snow Island. He went to the cabin occupied by the "Swamp Fox" and Captain Hickford, and told them that a strong force of British was in camp within three miles of the island.

"You think there are five hundred soldiers in the force, you say, Dick?" said the "Swamp Fox."

"Yes, sir, fully that number."

"While we have one hundred and sixty. That is big odds against us, but a surprise will help to equalize matters."

"Yes, so it will," agreed Hickford.

"Shall we make an attack to-night?"

"I am in favor of doing so."

"Very well. We will do so."

The men were told to get ready, and a couple of hours later they left the island, made their way to the main land, and then to the vicinity of the British encampment.

They crept up on the camp, almost surrounding it, and then, at a signal from the "Swamp Fox," they opened fire.

The bullets, whistling into the encampment from all directions, resulted in a great deal of excitement among the British, and they were thrown into considerable confusion. They tried to return the fire, and discharged many bullets into the surrounding darkness, but did not do any damage, for the patriots of the attacking force were thoroughly protected behind trees and rocks.

The patriots kept up a steady fire for nearly an hour, and then the British, rendered desperate by the rain of bullets, made a charge in the direction from which many of the shots came. The patriots, not being in sufficient force to withstand a charge, beat a retreat, and kept on till the redcoats ceased the pursuit.

Then they reloaded their weapons, made their

way back and again opened fire on the enemy. And again the British charged them, forcing them back.

These tactics were kept up till after midnight, and then the patriots, having caused the enemy a lot of worry and trouble, and having killed a goodly number and wounded quite a good many, retired to their rendezvous on Snow Island in the swamp. They had lost no men, but several were wounded. The British had lost at least a score killed, and twice that number had been more or less seriously wounded.

So the patriots felt that they had scored quite a victory. That the British looked at the matter in the same light was evident, also, when next morning they broke camp and returned to Charleston.

There they must have had a great story to tell to General Cornwallis, for a few days later a force consisting of at least one thousand again appeared in the vicinity of the swamp, and went into camp on a knoll, where it had rather a strong position.

Dick discovered this force also, and reported its presence to General Marion and Captain Hickford, who at once began figuring on causing the

Redcoats as much trouble as possible. To that end, they made attacks at night, each night for the next two or three nights, and they caused the British a lot of worry, and killed and wounded a number.

The Redcoats worked as best they could, putting in the time during the day, searching for the rendezvous of the "Swamp Fox," but to no avail.

However, just as they were on the point of giving up the search and returning to Charleston, they were joined by a Tory, who claimed he knew where the rendezvous of the "Swamp Fox" was.

It happened, however, that Dick Dare had been reconnoitering the camp when the Tory arrived there, and he saw the fellow go to the tent occupied by the commander of the British force. He guessed that the fellow had information of importance, and so he stayed till the sentinels on the beat nearest him were changed, in the hope of hearing them say something about the Tory.

His hopes were realized, for as he crouched in the underbrush near the sentinels, he heard the one that had just come to relieve the other say, in a triumphant voice: "I guess we'll get the 'Swamp Fox' and his gang to-morrow."

"How is that?" asked the other.

"That man that came into camp a little while ago knows where the rendezvous of the 'Swamp Fox' is."

"Where is the rendezvous, did he say?"

"On an island in a swamp not far from here."

"Ah. Then we'll soon have the 'Swamp Fox.'"

"Yes, we'll get him to-morrow. The man says that he has only about one hundred and fifty men."

"Humph. To judge by the work he has done, and keeps doing, he might have a thousand men."

"That's so, he certainly has made things lively in this part of the country."

Then the sentinel that had been relieved went into camp to get his rations, and the other began pacing his beat. Dick, having secured some very important information, darted away, hastened to the rendezvous of the island and told the "Swamp Fox" the news.

"In that case," said the "Swamp Fox," thoughtfully, "it will be best for us to be away when the British come here to look for us, and the next question, is, where shall we go?"

"That I leave to your judgment, General

Marion." replied Captain Hickford, "as you know this region better than I do."

The "Swamp Fox" was thoughtful for a few minutes, and then said: "I believe that the little valley up in the hill region, where the Indians had their encampment when we made the attack on them, will be a good place for a rendezvous."

"It is settled, then. We will break camp immediately after supper, and will leave this place and go to the valley in question."

This plan was put into effect, the men breaking camp soon after supper, and when they reached the main land, they moved away through the forest and marched steadily till they reached the valley, which was at about three o'clock in the morning.

Then they went into camp, and settled down for a period of rest, while waiting for an opportunity to strike the British another blow.

The British, guided by the Tory, did find Snow Island, but there were no patriot soldiers there to capture. The "Swamp Fox" had proven his right to the title again, by slipping away from them.

CHAPTER XVII

Dick Reconnoiters

EARLY next morning, Dick Dare was summoned to the tent of the "Swamp Fox" and Captain Hickford, and General Marion said to him:

"We are desirous, Dick, of learning what the British intend doing, and so if you will go back in the direction of the swamp and reconnoiter, we shall be glad to secure the information."

"Very well, I will go at once, sir," said Dick.

After a little further conversation, he left the valley and set out in the direction of their late camp.

When he reached his objective point, however, he did not see any signs of the British, and so he made his way to the island in the swamp.

The British had evidently been there, but they had gone again, and Dick wondered if they had

returned to Charleston, or whether they were still in the country, engaged in the search for the Swamp Fox.

"I'll make a search in various directions, and inquire at the farm-houses," he decided. "Perhaps I shall learn the whereabouts of the Redcoats."

He put this plan into effect, and covered quite a good-sized amount of territory before dark. He made inquiries at several houses, and finally learned that a large British force had been seen going in a westerly direction.

Although it was now dark, Dick at once set out to follow, but had not proceeded far, when suddenly he was given a surprise that was anything but pleasant. Without warning he felt himself seized from behind by several strong hands, and although he struggled fiercely, he was overpowered, and his wrists were bound together behind his back by thongs.

He could not see his captors plainly, owing to the darkness, but he knew they were Indians.

"Where are you taking me?" he asked, when they set out through the timber, with him in their midst.

"Ugh, no talk," was the gruff reply.

Dick said no more, for he knew they would not give him any satisfaction, and a couple of hours later he was led into an Indian village.

He was taken before the chief, who looked at him, from his seat on a blanket, within the radius of the light from the campfire, and grunted in a satisfied manner.

"Ugh, we got white boy, this time," he said.

"You have me a prisoner," said Dick. "What are you going to do with me?"

"Dunno — yit. Mebby burn um at stake, ugh."

"But, why? I have done nothing against your tribe, have I?" asked Dick.

"Ugh, white boy escape from Injuns in valley, an' bring sojers. Boy remember?"

"I have never seen you or your tribe before," said Dick.

"Injuns have a warrior here that was in valley. He know white boy. He want white boy burned at stake, ugh."

Dick made no further reply. He knew that it would do no good to try to persuade the redskins that burning at the stake or running the gauntlet was no way to treat a prisoner. He would have to trust to his ability to escape.

The chief now ordered that Dick be taken to a wigwam near the center of the village and a guard be placed over him. These instructions were quickly complied with.

Left alone, Dick began to work at the thong binding his wrists, but could not get it loosened. He finally lay down on a pile of boughs at one side, and tried to go to sleep.

Dick did finally fall into a fairly sound slumber, and he slept till sometime between midnight and morning, when he was awakened by a crash of thunder, and he could see the flashes of lightning, through the cracks in the skins of which the tent was made.

"A thunder storm is coming up," was his thought, and he lay there, watching the lightning flashes and listening to the peals of thunder.

Brighter flashed the lightning, louder rumbled the thunder, till the loud claps, seemingly right above the village, sounded like the roar of heavy artillery. Dick had never known such a terrible storm.

Then he heard the wind begin to whistle through the cracks in the wigwam, and a little later he heard a sullen, roaring, rumbling sound, different from thunder, in that it was steady and

continuous, and suddenly he uttered an exclamation: "A hurricane!"

It was the season of the year when hurricanes raged along the coast. Dick had heard of them, from people who lived in that region, but had never seen one, and he judged from the sound that he was about to experience one.

Louder sounded the roaring reverberations, and then Dick heard cries from the Indians, who were evidently terrified. Then, suddenly, amid the flashing of the lightning, the crashing of thunder, the down-pouring of rain and the roaring of the wind, the hurricane struck the Indian village in full force.

The shrieks and yells of the redskins sounded above the tempest, and then the wigwam Dick was in was torn away, he was in some way encompassed in its folds and went flying into the darkness. He was lifted and carried along for a considerable space, as if by invisible hands, only to reach a secure and fairly comfortable anchorage presently. He found himself lying in what seemed to be a sheltered nook, while the hurricane rumbled onward, leaving him behind.

His hands were bound, of course, and he was unable to do much. He knew that he would

have to stay where he was till morning, at any rate, and so he made himself as comfortable as possible. He wondered how the Indians had fared, and while thus wondering, he drifted off into a sort of slumber, and dozed fitfully till morning.

With the coming of daylight, he was able to struggle out of the imprisoning folds of the tent. He looked around at the scene of devastation with wonder. Trees were torn up by the roots, and in many instances broken short off, and the region was desolate in a space half a mile wide and extending in either direction as far as he could see.

There were no signs of the Indians to be seen anywhere around.

"If my arms were only free, I would be all right," murmured Dick. "Perhaps I may find a settler's house somewhere around here, and get my hands freed. I'll make the attempt, at any rate."

Then he crossed the swath of desolation, and entering the woods, made his way onward, looking around him eagerly as he went, for sight of a settler's home.

CHAPTER XVIII

Dick Finds a Friend

DICK had gone perhaps three miles, when he came in sight of a cabin in the timber, and he approached it at a rapid pace, for he believed now he would soon have his arms free.

On reaching the cabin, he kicked against the door, and waited for somebody to appear in response. He heard footsteps, and a few moments later the door opened and a woman of middle age was seen standing on the threshold. She eyed Dick inquiringly, and with considerable curiosity.

"Who are ye, young man?" she asked. "An' what ye want?"

"I am a stranger in this part of the country, ma'am," was Dick's reply. "I was captured by a band of Indians last night, and was taken to

their village and placed in one of the wigwams, and in the night there came a hurricane and blew me quite a distance. I stayed there till this morning, and I have come here to get you to unfasten my hands."

He turned his back toward her as he spoke, and she uttered an exclamation. "Goodness me," she cried, "ye don't mean to say thet yer hands wuz tied when the hurricane blowed ye away, do ye?"

"Yes, ma'am, and if you will be so kind as to untie or cut the thong that is holding my wrists, I will be much obliged to you, indeed."

"I'll git a knife an' cut the thong, young man," the woman said. "Ye jest come right into the house an' set down."

Dick obeyed, for he was still somewhat sore and tired as a result of the way he had been handled by the hurricane. Entering, he took a seat, and the woman went into the kitchen and returned, bringing a knife, with which she quickly cut the thong binding Dick's wrists, and his arms were free.

"Oh, thank you, ma'am," said Dick, chafing his wrists to get the blood circulating.

"Ye're welcome, young man," said the woman.

"How fur frum here was them Injuns, did ye say?"

"Their village was only about three miles from here, ma'am, that is, as near as I can figure it."

"Goodness me! D'ye s'pose there's any danger uv 'em comin' here?"

Dick shook his head. "I couldn't say, ma'am," he said. "I looked all around there, this morning, but could find no signs of the Indians anywhere. I guess the hurricane scared them away."

"I hope ye're right about thet, young man."

"I think I am, ma'am. And now, could you give me a bite of breakfast?"

"Oh, yes, young man, sech as et is."

"Oh, plain, solid food is all that I care for," said Dick, with a smile.

"I can give ye hoe-cakes an' meat, an' some coffee."

"That will be a feast, ma'am," said Dick.

The woman bustled into the kitchen, and began cooking meat, bread and coffee, and the smell of the food cooking made Dick more hungry than ever. Every once in a while the woman would come to the door and ask a question about the

Indians, and Dick would answer as best he could.

Presently she announced that breakfast was ready, and Dick ate heartily. He was hungry, as he had had nothing to eat since noon of the day before.

"You haven't told me your name yit, young man," said his hostess.

"So I haven't," said the youth. "My name is Dick Dare."

"What kind uv bizness are ye in?"

"I'm a soldier."

"A sojer, ye say?" in some excitement. "Wal, now thet's interestin' to me, becos my brother Zeke is a sojer. He's with Capt'in Hickford's company, Dick Dare."

"Is your brother's name Mullin?" asked Dick.

"Yes, so 'tis," was the reply. "D'ye know him?"

"Yes, ma'am. I am with Captain Hickford's company, too, and with the 'Swamp Fox.' Did your brother live here with you?"

"Yes, with me an' my ole man. Zeke hain't married, an' so he said as how't he'd jine the army an' help fight fur Liberty."

"That was the right spirit," said Dick, heartily.

"Whar ye goin'? Back to the army?" the woman asked, as Dick rose to go.

"No, I'm following a force of British soldiers that were, the last I heard of them, going in a westerly direction."

"They didn't pass here," said the woman. "Unless et was at night, an' we didn't see 'em."

"I'll continue onward in that direction and look for them, anyway," said the youth, and then he said good-by.

"Good-by," said the woman, "an' good luck to ye. An' say, Dick Dare," she called out after him, "tell Zeke ye seen me."

"All right, I'll tell him," replied Dick.

Then he made his way onward toward the west, and kept a sharp lookout around him. At noon, he stopped at a house, and asked if he could get dinner there. The man who had come to the door was a surly looking fellow, and he hesitated before replying, but presently said he guessed the young man could have a bite to eat.

Dick entered, then, and talked with the man till dinner was on the table, and from the man's conversation Dick decided that he was a Tory.

The man asked Dick a number of rather

searching questions, and the youth answered them as best he could, without arousing suspicion that he was a patriot.

At least, Dick believed that the man was not suspicious, but he remembered afterwards that there was a peculiar expression in his eyes that ought to have warned him. As Dick rose from the table, he chanced to be standing by the open cellar door. "I have some fine cider," said the man. "Let me get you a cup full." Cup in hand he came over to Dick, but suddenly shoved the youth, unprepared for and not suspecting such a move, down the cellar-stairs.

Dick went bumping to the floor, but was not injured, excepting for a few bruises, and he leaped up and started to run up the steps, only to hear and see the heavy oaken door go shut with a slam.

The youth hastened up the steps and tried to push the door open, but could not do so.

It was fastened on the upper side.

CHAPTER XIX

Tories Foiled

TOM and Ben, with their usual enterprise, went to Captain Hickford soon after Dick had taken his departure, and asked to be permitted to go out on a scouting and reconnoitering expedition.

"Where do you want to go?" asked the captain.

"Oh, we thought we would go toward the south and west," said Tom. "Dick has gone toward the east, so we won't interfere in any way with his work."

Permission was granted and they made their way toward the southwest, and for a while their course was through heavy woods. Then the trees grew sparser, and the country became rough and hilly.

The youths kept a sharp lookout, for they did not know at what moment they might run up against a party of Redcoats, Tories or Indians.

Presently, after a climb of a mile, at least, they came to the top of a hill, and stood there, looking down into the valley below. Suddenly an exclamation escaped the lips of Tom:

"Look yonder, Ben!"

He pointed his finger, and Ben looked in the direction indicated.

"What do you see?" asked Tom.

"Looks like a camp of some kind, Tom."

"That's what it is."

"It's a camp of Redcoats or Tories."

"Likely — though it might be Indians."

"I don't believe they are Indians."

"Nor do I believe they are Redcoats. If they were, we would see the red of their uniforms."

"Then the chances are that they are Tories."

"Yes."

"Well, what's next on the programme?"

"We must go down and reconnoiter the encampment and find out whether the people are enemies, and if so, how many there are of them, and where they are bound for, and what they intend to do."

"I rather think we will have a hard time finding out all that, Tom," with a smile.

"Well, we'll do the best we can, and learn all we possibly can about them."

"All right. Go ahead. I'm with you."

"Come on, old fellow, and we'll see how near we can get to that encampment without their knowledge," said Tom as he started down the slope.

Gradually they worked their way down the slope, and as they drew nearer, they were enabled to make out that the camp held about fifty persons, and as they did not wear uniforms, the youths guessed that they were Tories.

"Likely they're a tough gang, Ben," said Tom, during one of the periods when they were resting. "Those Tories are often simply guerrillas and plunderers."

"True," said Ben. "We will have to be careful and not fall into their hands."

Then they started on again, and made their way down till they were within about two hundred yards of the encampment. They could see the men plainly, now, and could hear their voices and occasional laughter, but could not distinguish words.

"They're Tories, sure," whispered Tom, "and I would like to get close enough to hear their conversation. Come on."

Again they started down the slope. They made their way slowly, and very cautiously, and presently reached a point within one hundred yards of the camp.

Here they paused, and listened. They heard one of the men say:

"Hadn't we better start pretty soon?"

"No hurry," said another.

"We don't need to get there till after dark," said still another.

"But, it's ten miles from here."

"Three hours' walk. It isn't time to start yet."

"We had better eat supper here before we start," said another.

"Yes, I guess we had. Get to work and cook supper, some of you boys."

Three or four of the men busied themselves building a fire and then in cooking. Tom and Ben watched them, and as the odor of cooking meat came to their nostrils, they sniffed hungrily.

"That smells good," whispered Tom. "I

wish they would invite us to eat with them," with a grin.

"They would, if they knew you were here," said Ben, with a smile. "If you will step out and announce yourself, they will give you an invitation, likely."

Tom shook his head. "I guess I won't do that."

The Tories ate supper, and then sat around a while, talking, after which they broke camp and moved away, in a northwest direction.

Tom and Ben followed them, cautiously at a distance of about three hundred yards.

"We'll find out where they are going and what they are going to do," said Tom.

They followed the party for three hours, and then came out in a valley in which was a village, made up of the homes of settlers. There were, judging by the lights that shone through the darkness from windows, about twenty houses.

"So that's what they are going to do," said Tom. "They intend to plunder these settlers."

"And we can't keep them from it, Tom."

"It would seem not."

Just then the party of Tories stopped, while yet a couple of hundred yards from the nearest

house, and Tom and Ben were struck with an idea.

"If we could get around them and reach the houses and warn the settlers, they would at least be able to make a fight," whispered Tom, eagerly.

"Yes, so they could," agreed Ben. "Let's try it."

"All right. We will make a detour and go as fast as possible."

They set out, running as swiftly and lightly as possible, and in a few minutes had made a circuit of the Tories and were in among the houses.

They knocked at the door of one of the houses, and when it was opened by a man, Tom said, hurriedly: "There's a party of Tory-guerrillas just at the edge of the village, sir, and they are going to plunder your homes. We thought that you might be able to get the men of the village together and show fight."

"Sure we will!" exclaimed the man. "You boys go to the houses as fast as you can, and tell them what you have told me. I'll get my gun, and get to doing the same thing."

"All right, sir, and we'll help you fight."

Tom and Ben separated and hastened to one

house after another, knocking on the doors, and telling the men the same story they had told the other man.

In a few minutes they had warned all the men of the settlement, and nearly thirty men gathered in and around the three or four houses on the side next to the Tories, while the women and children hastened to the houses farthest away.

The men had occupied their positions only a few minutes, when the Tories advanced bent on plundering the houses. They did not suspect that their presence was known, so when they were greeted with a volley from about thirty rifles, they were doubtless given the surprise of their lives. Their plans had been circumvented. Usually these marauders divided their forces, three or four men entering each house, and then their task was simple. They did not come to fight, however, and now finding that their presence was known to the settlers, they fired a volley, and started to run away, leaving those injured to their fate.

"After them!" cried one of the settlers. "Let's teach them a lesson, while we're at it."

The settlers rushed out of the houses and took after the fleeing Tories. They chased them for

quite a distance, and then stopped and returned to their homes, where they found a couple of the Tories lying on the ground, dead, and three wounded ones.

The settlers buried the dead Tories and carried the wounded ones into one of the houses, and dressed their wounds. Then, quiet having been restored, the settlers asked Tom and Ben who they were.

"We are members of the 'Swamp Fox's' force," said Tom. "My name is Tom Dare, and my friend here is Ben Foster."

"Well, you did us a good turn when you came and warned us," said one of the settlers.

"We were glad to warn you," said Tom. "That is what the 'Swamp Fox' is trying to do, you know — cause the Tories and Redcoats all the trouble he can, and do as much good to the patriots as possible."

The settlers, to prevent being taken by surprise, should the Tories try another attack, stationed sentinels, and the night passed quietly.

Next morning the patriot youths ate breakfast at the home of the settler, and then set out in the direction of the point where the "Swamp Fox" had his encampment, in the little valley.

"Well, Ben, we did a pretty good thing by going on a scouting and reconnoitering expedition," said Tom.

"Yes, those settlers would have been plundered of everything that they have that is of any value, and perhaps some of them would have been killed, if we had not warned them."

"Now if we could locate a force of Redcoats or Tories, and take the information regarding their whereabouts to the 'Swamp Fox,' I would feel pretty well satisfied."

They had gone about two miles, when they caught sight of a party of men making their way through the fields. There were only four in the party but they were armed and Tom and Ben decided to follow them, as they were of the opinion that they might be going somewhere to join a larger force.

The two youths followed, being careful to keep far enough behind so as to avoid being seen, and a little while after noon the men stopped at a large log house. After knocking on the door, they were admitted.

"Well, we've run them to earth," said Tom.

"Looks that way," said Ben. "I wonder if this is a rendezvous for a gang of guerrillas?"

"Possibly. Let's go up to the house ask for some food and try and ascertain what is going on."

They made their way around to the rear, where the kitchen was, and after listening at the door a few moments, Tom cautiously opened the door slightly. He peered in, and not seeing anybody pushed the door still farther open. Still not seeing anyone in the room, he stepped cautiously to the connecting door, and placing his ear against it, listened. Ben was close behind him.

They listened for a few minutes, and then Tom turned his head and looked at his companion, an astonished expression on his face. "They said that Dick is a prisoner in the cellar of this house, Ben!" he whispered.

"Then we must rescue him!"

"Yes, we —"

At this moment the door opened, and the youths found themselves facing a gang of Tories.

CHAPTER XX

A Terrible Danger

THE Tories in their turn were surprised, and the leader cried, gruffly: "Who are ye, anyhow?"

Tom Dare was quick-witted and recovered almost immediately from the feeling of dismay that had come over him.

"We are strangers, sir, traveling to the west part of the State," he replied. "We stopped here, hoping to get something to eat."

"What right had ye to come inter the house?" angrily.

"You did not hear us knock on the outer door, sir. As we got no answer, thinking there might be nobody at home, we pushed the door open and entered."

"And ye come over here to this door an' listened to what we was sayin', I s'pose!"

"We heard voices in that room, sir, and crossed the kitchen and were going to knock on the door, when you opened it."

"I believe ye're two blamed spies!" cried the man.

"You are mistaken," said Tom.

"I'm shore I'm not mistaken. Ye're spies an' rebels."

"No, we are—"

"Seize 'em, men!" the man interrupted, and the men already at their side seized hold of Tom and Ben. The youths resisted, but they could not free themselves, and they were quickly conducted to the door leading to the cellar. The door was opened, and they were shoved down the steps. Then the door was closed with a slam, and fastened.

"Well, that is a nice way to treat strangers!" exclaimed Tom. "They wouldn't listen to anything."

"Are you here, Dick?" called out Ben.

"Yes," was the reply. "Is that you, Tom and Ben?"

"Yes. Who are these fellows, anyhow?"

"Tories, I guess."

"They are ruffians," grumbled Tom.

"Yes, they're guerrillas, I think," said Dick.

"I wonder if we can get out of here?" questioned Tom.

"Not easily," replied Dick. "I've tried, and found that there is no way to get out, except to dig through the walls, and they are solid earth and stone. There are no windows."

"That isn't very pleasant information," said Ben. "We will have to stay in here till the rascals see fit to let us out, then, I suppose?"

"Perhaps not," said Dick. As there was no way of getting out, besides the door at the top of the steps, I have begun making a tunnel, but it's slow work without tools."

"We can help now," said Tom.

They investigated Dick's undertaking. He had already with great effort taken out from the wall a number of stones, but a large jagged one had as yet resisted his efforts to dislodge it.

They took turns now and while they were at work, they heard a rapping on the door. Dick called out: "What do you want?"

"I wanted to tell you that we have decided you are rebel spies," was the reply, "and we are going to leave you in there, to starve. We're going, now, so good-by."

"You had better let us out," cried Dick, impressively. "If you don't, it will go hard with you."

"Why so?"

"We have friends, who will hunt you down and punish you, if you do as you have said."

"Then you are rebels, and spies, sure enough," the man replied. "I was sure of it. And you will stay where you are. Your threats have no effect on us."

Then followed the trampling of feet, followed by the slamming of a door, and then — silence.

"Perhaps we may be able to force the door at the head of the stairs, now that the men are gone," said Tom.

"We'll try it, at any rate," said Dick.

The three made their way up the steps, and tried to force the door upward, but it was strong, the fastening was secure, and had been barricaded as well. They finally gave up trying, and went back down the steps, to resume their efforts at the wall. In time they must succeed.

Presently Tom suddenly exclaimed: "I smell smoke!"

"So do I," said Ben, after sniffing once or twice.

"Listen!" then said Dick. "What is that crackling noise?"

They listened a few moments, and Tom exclaimed: "That's a fire burning, upstairs. And I'll bet anything that the house is on fire!"

"Do you really believe so?" exclaimed Dick.

"I do. What do you say, Ben?"

"I'm inclined to believe that you are right, Tom," was the reply.

"And so am I," said Dick. "And if the house is on fire — what is going to happen to us?"

"We'll be burned to a crisp. I reckon we can't break through the wall in time," said Tom.

They discussed the matter calmly enough, for that was their way of doing. Working, however with feverish haste. They were brave, and they had encountered so many dangers during the past five years that they could face danger with an undaunted front, so now they talked calmly and quietly, but at the same time their hearts were heavy, for they were young and life seemed good to them. They did not want to die, and least of all did they wish to die such a terrible death as being burned to a crisp in the cellar of this old log house. It would be hor-

rible to have the burning logs come tumbling in on top of them.

As they worked, making slow progress, the smoke grew stronger, the crackling of the flames grew louder, and they began to feel the heat to a considerable degree.

"The house is going to burn to the ground, without doubt," said Dick.

"Yes, the logs are old and dry, and the fire will not stop as long as there is any wood left to feed upon," said Ben.

"Do you suppose those scoundrels deliberately set the house on fire?" asked Tom.

"Possible they did," said Dick. "Though there is a probability that it may have got started accidentally."

"Well, anyway, that doesn't make any difference, it will burn us just the same," said Tom. "That is, unless we can succeed in making our escape, which at the present time looks doubtful."

At this moment there sounded a crash on the floor above their heads.

"The roof has fallen in!" exclaimed Ben in dismay.

"Yes," said Dick, "help here with this stone,

the fire will be eating through the floor very soon, now."

"So it will," said Tom, "and then —" He was choking with the smoke and fell to the floor. Here the air was purer and at his call Dick and Ben crouched down beside him.

For a few minutes the three were silent, each busy with his thoughts, and above their heads the flames roared and crackled, while the smoke grew so thick as to almost choke them, and the heat was becoming almost unbearable.

The patriot youths believed that never in their lives had they been in such terrible danger as they were at that moment.

CHAPTER XXI

Unexpected Help

BUT there was help for the youths, help that they had not counted on. A heavy rainstorm had come up, and about this time it broke with great fury, and the rain fairly poured down on the burning building.

There was a hissing, a spluttering and a sizzling, and the cellar became filled with moist heat hard to bear, but Dick made one more effort and pulled away a stone that gave outlet to the open air. The opening was too small for an exit, but it gave them fresh air and hope.

"If it keeps on raining, it'll put the fire out, though," said Tom.

"I believe the rain is going to put out the fire, too," said Dick. "The hissing and sizzling is growing fainter."

"Yes," said Tom, after listening a few moments. "Thank goodness, we are going to get out of here all right."

"Yes, I think we are," said Dick, and there was great relief and satisfaction in his voice.

Gradually the hissing, spluttering and sizzling grew less, and finally it ceased altogether, and then the youths began working to get up into the room above their heads. This was not very difficult, as the fire had eaten a hole through the floor, and they quickly pulled away pieces of the boards till they had made a hole large enough, when they climbed up through the hole.

They were in darkness, excepting when there came a flash of lightning, and then they could see that the house was about burned down. Only a portion of the walls stood, and the roof, which had fallen in, had about all burned. It was a scene of desolation indeed, but the patriot youths did not mind that. They had escaped with their lives from what had seemed like the most dangerous experience they had ever undergone. They were very thankful, and the discomfort they had undergone, and what they were now undergoing, in being out in a pouring rain, did not dismay them.

"What shall we do, and where shall we go?" asked Tom.

"We will set out in the direction of the encampment," ordered Dick, "but we will perhaps

come upon the house of a settler, after a while, and we can find shelter for the rest of the night."

They set out, at once, Dick taking the lead, slowly, picking their way by the light from the lightning flashes, mostly, and two or three hours later they came upon a little log cabin. They knocked on the door, and receiving no reply, pushed the door open, and found that the cabin was deserted.

"It's a vacant cabin," said Tom. "Well, it'll give us shelter till morning."

"Yes, it will be better than being out in the storm," said Dick.

They entered and closed the door, and then Dick got out flint and steel and tinder, and quickly had a little blaze going in the fire-place.

Having done this, the youths removed their clothing and dried the garments before the cheerful blaze, and when these were again donned, they felt much better. They then lay down in front of the hearth and were soon asleep, and slept soundly till morning.

As they had no food with them, they started early, hoping to find a settler's cabin soon, where they could get something to eat.

They made their way at a fair rate of speed, and in about an hour they came to a long house, from the chimney of which smoke was issuing.

"Here is where we get breakfast," cried Tom, his eyes lighting up.

"We'll try here for something to eat, anyway," said Dick.

He knocked on the door, and it was opened by a woman of middle age, and Dick, bowing politely, said: "Could we get something to eat, here, ma'am?"

"Are ye Tories, or patriots?"

Dick, guessing by the fact that she called the loyalists Tories that she was a patriot, did not hesitate to answer, and said they were patriots.

"Ye kin have breakfast, then," was the reply. "Come in."

They entered and proceeded to wash their faces and hands, after which they sat down to await breakfast. The woman, when the meal was ready, and they had taken seats at the table, asked them a number of questions about themselves, all of which the youths answered promptly and frankly, and then the woman told them why she disliked Tories. A party had called at the cabin one night, and had taken her husband out

and given him a terrible beating, and had then plundered the cabin, taking everything they could carry, and naturally she hated Tories.

"So if you had said you were Tories, I wouldn't have given you anything to eat," she said in conclusion.

"Well, we're mighty glad we aren't Tories, ma'am," said Dick, "for we were powerful hungry."

"We don't have any use for Tories," put in Tom.

"Oh, don't ye, hey?" cried a sneering voice, and at this moment into the room stepped a rough-looking man, with a rifle in his hand, and behind him, looking through the doorway, could be seen several faces.

The woman uttered a cry of dismay, and looked terribly frightened.

"Who are you, and what do you want?" asked Dick, sternly.

"I'm one uv them Tories ye was jest talkin' about," was the reply, "an' we want ye fellers — what ain't Tories an' are glad uv et, ha, ha, ha! I guess ye'll wish't ye was Tories afore we git through with ye."

"Do you think so?" said Dick.

The three youths leveled their pistols

"Yas I do."

"Well, you'll find that you are mistaken, then," was the reply. He had counted the number of the Tory party, but only the one had entered the cabin.

"Why so? Ye don't think ye kin git away, do ye?"

"You haven't gotten us yet, so that we do not have to get away."

"Ye think not?"

"I know it. You had better go your way and let us alone. We are not bothering you, and —"

"Oh, ho, ho, ho," laughed the man. "Jest listen to him, men," addressing his comrades on the outside. "He's funny, hain't he?"

"You'll find that I mean what I say," said Dick. "You have not got us prisoners, and you are not going to get us, either."

"How are ye goin' to help yerselves?" with a leer.

"This way," said Dick. He had previously given Tom and Ben the signal that he was going to resist, and now the three youths leveled their pistols, one in each hand. The six muzzles frowned at the ruffians causing the leader to take a step backward and utter an exclamation of dismay.

CHAPTER XXII

To the Rescue

"HOW do you like the looks of affairs now?" asked Tom, with a chuckle. "We've kind of turned the tables on you, eh?"

"You had better put up them pistols," blustered the Tory. "I've got twenty men out thar," nodding toward the door, "an' ye kain't fight so many as thet."

"We are going to fight them, if you force us to do so," said Dick, quietly and sternly. "And if we do have to fight you, I will say that the first man to get a bullet in his heart will be you."

The Tory turned pale, and it was easy to see that he was greatly alarmed. "D-don't ye shoot!" he stammered, looking eagerly and anxiously toward the doorway. "I — I — ain't agoin' to try to take ye prisoners, so ye needn't be skeered."

"Oh, we're not 'skeered,'" said Tom with a grin.

"If you will order your men to leave this vicinity at once," said Dick, "we will let you go in ten minutes. But if you refuse, we will make you sorry that you did so."

"I'll order them to go," said the Tory, "Hank take the force and move on to the cross-roads."

"Yes," said Dick. "And don't linger, either. Start at once, and keep on going, or you will lose your leader."

"W-we will." And suiting action to the word they could be seen through the open doorway marching up the road.

Their leader was thoroughly frightened, although his party consisted of several men and boys. He was undoubtedly afraid he would be made as was threatened the especial target of the youths, if they opened fire.

So the party of Tories kept on till it reached the cross-road as arranged. Then the leader was ordered to follow. This he quickly did.

"Well, if that don't beat anythin'!" exclaimed the woman, with a look of delight. "I wouldn't never hev believed that ye three young men could hev made all them Tories run."

"I guess they were somewhat surprised, themselves," said Dick, smiling.

"That fellow didn't expect that we would offer to resist," said Ben.

"No, and when we did, he was ready to get away as quickly as we would let him," chuckled Tom.

They stayed but a moment longer. It was wisdom to put some space between them and their foe, who might resort to son. k. Thanking their hostess for their breakfast, they said good-by and took their departure.

They walked steadily onward in the direction of the little valley in which the patriot force under the "Swamp Fox" and Captain Hickford was stationed, and when they came within a mile or so of the valley, they heard the sound of musketry.

"Sounds like an engagement!" exclaimed Tom, eagerly.

"So it does," said Dick. "I wonder if a force of British has found the rendezvous and made an attack?"

They hastened forward rapidly, and presently caught sight of some Redcoats. There seemed to be quite a force, which extended from

out in the open, up into the ravine, and almost to the point where it entered the valley. The Redcoats and Tories were firing rapidly, but the patriots kept back behind the wall at the sides of the ravine, and so were not being damaged much. They were keeping up a steady fire in return, and their bullets were doing considerable execution among the enemy.

The three youths paused and, stationed behind trees, watched the Redcoats and Tories. They sized up the strength of the attacking party, and judged that there were about three hundred of the enemy.

"Our force can hold its own against that number, all right," said Tom.

"Yes, but that will not be sufficient," said Dick. "Our force must be sufficiently strong to defeat the Redcoats, or they will keep it penned up in the valley till reinforcements arrive, and then its capture will be likely."

"But, in that case, what shall we do?" asked Ben. "Is there anything that we can do?"

"That is what I am trying to figure out," was the reply. "It would seem that we can hardly do anything."

"If we had the help of even as many as fifty

or sixty men, we could make an attack from the rear, and make the enemy think they were being attacked by a much stronger force. They might retreat, then, and the force in the valley could make its escape," said Tom.

"But where would we find the men?" asked Ben.

"We might be able to gather together a small force," said Dick. "And I believe that is what we will do."

They took their departure, and made their way to the settlement that Tom and Ben had saved from being plundered by the gang of Tories. The men were eager to do something to repay the youths for what they had done for them, and so they said they would go along and help drive the attacking force of Redcoats and Tories away, and that they would get some of their neighbors to go with them.

In a couple of hours eight or ten men had been added to the force, which now numbered, counting the three youths, thirty-six. With this number Dick Dare thought it possible to create such a diversion as would harass the enemy, and then the patriot force might emerge from the valley and seek safety in retreat.

Having secured a force, Dick led the way in the direction of the valley, and presently they could hear the rattle of the musketry, which grew louder as they advanced. The battle was still in progress.

It was now dark, and it would be easy to get near enough to the Redcoats to open fire on them without being discovered. Thus by taking them by surprise, it might be possible to cause a diversion helpful to the patriots.

Closer and closer to the enemy drew Dick Dare and his force, and when they were within pistol-shot distance, they began firing. They fired first a volley from the rifles of the settlers, and then close on the heels of this volley, they fired another from their pistols, and still another, and this indicated a large attacking force.

This false impression was what Dick had counted on, and when his men had hastily reloaded their weapons, they fired another series of volleys, with the result that the Redcoats and Tories became disconcerted and began a retreat. They came hastily out of the ravine, and made their way back into the forest, firing in the direction from which the volleys had come, and hav-

ing reloaded, the settlers were able to fire several volleys in return.

"You men stay here and keep up a constant firing at the enemy," said Dick, "and I'll slip into the valley and tell the 'Swamp Fox' that the way is open for his force to escape."

"All right," replied Tom. "You go on and do that, and we'll attend to the Redcoats."

Dick slipped away, and was soon in the valley, where he was given a joyous greeting by General Marion and Captain Hickford, and when he told them what he and his force of patriot settlers had done and were doing, the two congratulated him, and then, in order to take advantage of the opportunity to escape that was thus presented to them they ordered their men to leave the valley at once.

Fifteen minutes later they were with the force of settlers. Then, presently the scout brought back word that the Redcoats had retreated a distance of about a mile. The patriots then went into camp to wait till morning, when the location of the British and Tories would be learned, after which they could lay plans for their further campaign.

CHAPTER XXIII

After the British

EARLY next morning Dick Dare left the encampment and went on a reconnoitering expedition, to see where the British force was located. He advanced at a moderate pace for a mile or so, and then went slower, and kept a sharp lookout around him.

When he had gone about a mile farther, he caught sight of the Redcoats through the trees, and he now advanced very slowly, creeping from one hiding-place to another, and using every tree, shrub and stone to assist in keeping his approach from being discovered.

He crept up till within about one hundred and fifty yards of the encampment, and then took a careful survey of the enemy's force.

He saw that they were eating breakfast, and

he kept his position till they got through, hoping to learn what their future movements were to be. They might be intending to stay where they were, to break camp and march toward Charleston, or they might intend going in search of the patriot force.

When they had finished eating, they sat around for half an hour, and then they began breaking camp and getting ready to move, and when they were ready, they set out in the direction of Charleston.

Dick decided that they were indeed on their way to the city, and as they had a number of wounded soldiers to carry with them they could not go very rapidly.

Having come to this conclusion, Dick turned and hastened back to the patriot encampment, and apprised General Marion and Captain Hickford of the move of the enemy.

"Well, if they are headed for Charleston," said the "Swamp Fox," "we will follow and cause them as much trouble and do them as much damage as possible before they reach there."

"Yes, that will be the best course," said Captain Hickford. "With our small force, we can get around quickly, and can strike them fre-

quent blows and then get away from their vicinity before they can do anything in return."

"Yes, we will break camp at once," said the "Swamp Fox." "That will be sufficient work for us, for a little while."

The order was given to break camp and get ready to march, and the men quickly obeyed. Half an hour later they were ready, and the party set out. The company of settlers that had been raised by Dick, returned to their homes.

It was not until about three or four hours later that the patriots came in sight of the British, and then they advanced swiftly, but cautiously, and made a sudden attack on both sides, pouring bullets in among the Redcoats and causing them to fall into disorder and fire wildly in among the trees, in return.

Several of the British were killed and wounded, and, angered by the attack, the Redcoats charged, some in each direction. The patriots, knowing they could not stand against such an attack from many times their number, retreated into the depths of the forest, stopping, however, when the British ceased to advance. Then when the Redcoats made their way to the starting point and again set out toward Charleston,

the patriots, having reloaded their weapons, once more cautiously approached the enemy.

Again they made an attack, with about the same results as before, and this they kept up throughout that day. They caused the British an immense deal of worry, and killed and wounded quite a good many.

When the Redcoats went into camp, that evening, they placed sentinels, and made all arrangements possible to avoid being taken by surprise. The patriots, however, made an attack a little before midnight, and succeeded in doing considerable damage.

Next morning the same course was taken, and the British were worried till they reached the edge of the city, when the patriots came to a stop, as they did not dare venture within the limits of Charleston.

They went back a couple of miles, and went into camp on a knoll, from where it was possible to get a good view of the city. Here they decided to remain a few days, in the hope that they could do something that would damage the enemy, though what they could do, in such small force, was a mystery.

Dick Dare, now that they were close to the

city, asked permission to enter Charleston under the cover of darkness and spy on the British and try to learn something that would be of interest and value. The "Swamp Fox" and Captain Hickford told him to go ahead.

He succeeded in getting into Charleston in safety, and was there for several hours, reconnoitering and doing his best to learn something that would be of value to the "Swamp Fox."

The only information that he picked up that he considered to be of much interest, was regarding the prisoners that had been taken when Charleston was captured. He learned that a great many of the prisoners were incarcerated in old hulks of ships lying in the harbor, and he was struck with the idea that perhaps it might be possible to rescue some of these prisoners.

Filled with this idea, he made his way out of the city as quickly as possible, and hastening back to the encampment, told the Swamp Fox and Captain Hickford what he had learned.

They talked the matter over a while, and then decided that such a plan might be made a success, and then they told Dick to go ahead and put the plan into effect.

"We leave you to carry the matter through,"

said the "Swamp Fox." "Take as many men as you want, and go ahead."

"Very well," said Dick. "I will want only three or four men, as the larger number there is, the harder it will be to keep quiet, and it is quietness that will make a success of such an undertaking as the rescue of prisoners from the prison ships."

He went and told Tom and Ben to get ready, and also another soldier, and the four left the encampment a little later and made their way toward Charleston.

They were bent on a dangerous and daring adventure, that of rescuing prisoners from the prison-ships in the harbor. They reached the shore undiscovered.

"Here's a boat, Dick!"

It was Tom who spoke, and Dick, Ben and the other soldier hastened to where Tom stood, and found him bending over a boat.

"Get in," said Dick. The others obeyed, and then Dick pushed the boat off, and leaped in. A few moments later Tom and Ben were rowing slowly toward a dark object out in the harbor, the object being, they knew, a prison-ship.

They rowed slowly and carefully, so as not to

make any noise that would attract attention. As they got near to the hulk, they moved very slowly, for they knew there would be one or two sentinels on the deck, and to attract their attention would be to cause the alarm to be given, when their undertaking would prove to be a failure.

They succeeded in getting close up under the stern of the prison-ship without being discovered, however, and they found a rope hanging down almost to the water. Up this rope Dick climbed, to the deck. There was no sentinel near, and Dick signaled the others to come aboard.

In a few minutes the three were on the deck, and the boat was fastened by its painter, so it could not drift away. Then, led by Dick, the little party started on a tour of investigation.

As they neared the cabin, they heard the murmur of voices, and soon discovered that the sound came from one side of the cabin. The four crept around there, and made out two forms seated on the deck, with their backs to the wall. The two were the sentinels, and they were smoking and talking in low tones.

Dick had given his companions instructions, and now the four acted, quickly. They sprang

forward, Dick and Tom seizing one of the sentinels, while Ben and the other soldier seized the other.

The sentinels, thus taken by surprise, were quickly overpowered, and although they had tried to cry out, they had been unable to do so, owing to the fact that their mouths had been covered by a hand of one of the patriots, till their arms were bound, and then they were gagged. This having been accomplished, the two were carried into the cabin and deposited on the floor, after which the patriots started on a tour of investigation.

Forward they found a lantern, and they made their way down into the hold, where, by the lantern's light, they saw that there were perhaps fifty or sixty prisoners.

To Dick's delight, and that of Tom and Ben as well, Captain Morgan and about thirty of the members of his own company were among the prisoners. As may well be supposed, the greetings exchanged were very pleasing and hearty.

"Where did you boys come from, anyway?" the captain wanted to know.

"We escaped from the city, after General Lincoln surrendered," said Dick, "and went inland,

and since then we have been campaigning with the 'Swamp Fox.'"

"Well, that is interesting, sure," said the captain. "And now, if you can get us ashore and to your encampment, Dick, you will have done something that will benefit the Cause, for we will join the force of the 'Swamp Fox' and help him fight the Redcoats and Tories." This was to be an accomplished fact as readers of "The Dare Boys at Monmouth" may learn.

"I think we can get you ashore and to our encampment," said Dick. "It will take some time, for we have only one boat. Let all who can swim ashore."

All the prisoners were soon on deck, and then as many as the boat would hold got into it, and were rowed ashore, while many swam and then the boat returned for the final load.

While the boat was being filled by the last of the prisoners, there came the sound of a musket-shot from another prison-ship about two hundred yards distant. The sentinel there had finally discovered that something out of the ordinary was going on at the neighboring prison-ship, and had fired to give the alarm.

"We must get ashore as quickly as possible,"

said Dick. "There will be boats putting off from the shore, quickly."

Boats did put off but the escaping prisoners were obscured by the darkness and the last party of patriots were safely landed on the shore. The entire company set out then in the direction of the encampment of the "Swamp Fox" and his force.

When the encampment was reached, the escaped prisoners were given a hearty welcome, and as they had been given only just enough food to keep them alive, they were nearly starved. Soon, with proper food they brightened up wonderfully, and Captain Morgan talking with the "Swamp Fox," told many stories of the daring work performed by the Dare Boys in the patriot army. Also, he told of wonderful spy-work performed by Dick.

"He has done considerable work for us, also," said the "Swamp Fox," "and this last achievement, of rescuing you men from the prison-ship, is worthy of great praise."

"He has done many such feats as that," said Captain Morgan. "He is brave, energetic and shrewd, and can plan and execute with equal success."

"Yes, he would make a good general."

"So he would," said Captain Morgan, "but he seems to prefer to be just a scout."

Among the prisoners that had been rescued were Tim Murphy, the jolly Irish soldier, and Fritz Schmockenburg, the German soldier, and these two, the chums and friends of the Dare Boys, were delighted to be with their young friends again.

"It'll be loike ould toimes ag'in to foight the Ridcoats an' Tories, by the side av you byes," said Tim.

"Yah, id will mage us much habbiness feel, alretty," said Fritz.

"And we'll be glad to have you and Fritz with us, Tim," said Dick.

"Yes, indeed," said Tom and Ben.

And for several months the little patriot force, consisting of Captain Hickford's company, a portion of Captain Morgan's company, and the "Swamp Fox's" force, all under the general command of General Marion, did do a lot of fighting in the country surrounding Charleston, and as may well be supposed, the Dare Boys and Ben Foster and Tim Murphy and Fritz Schmockenburg did their full share of the fighting.

Such good execution did this little force do,

indeed, that the mention of the "Swamp Fox" was sufficient to cause a party of Redcoats or Tories to look about them with looks of fear on their faces.

So it may be said that the Dare Boys' campaign with the "Swamp Fox" in South Carolina was one of the most successful that they took part in during the war for independence.

THE END

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